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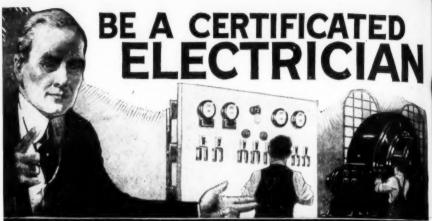
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A Complete Novel

KATHARINE HILL



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AINSLEE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

CONTENTS

| The Gods of Unconvention . Complete Novelette | ٠ | ٠ | | Katharine Hill , . | | 1 |
|--|------|----------|----|-----------------------|---|-----|
| Nightmare. Verse | | | ٠ | Anne Jellette | | 47 |
| One Kiss in Paradise. Short St | ory | | | Scammon Lockwood . | | 48 |
| The Fifth Hole. Short Story | | | | Marie Van Vorst | | 58 |
| Out of the Depths. Verse . | | | | Berton Braley | | 65 |
| The Grin. Short Story . | | | | Valma Clark | | 66 |
| The Mask. Verse | | | | Louise Heald | | 73 |
| More Super-Women. Series | | | | Anice Terhune | | 74 |
| Draga Lunjewitza: The Ser | rvia | n Sirer | 1. | | | 1 |
| Sixty-one Seconds to Train Time. | Sho | ort Stor | У | Richard Connell | | 79 |
| The Pantoum Plaintive. Verse | | | | M. B. Stephenson | | 86 |
| Weg. Serial | | | | Violet Irwin | * | 87 |
| The Stream. Verse | | | | John Murray Gibbon . | | 106 |
| Six Feet or Over. Short Story | | | | Louise Rice | | 107 |
| Dedicatory. Verse | | | | Henry Martyn Hoyt . | | 114 |
| The Mantle. Short Story . | | | | Robert Neville | | 115 |
| Philanderer's Progress. Series VI. Rosalie and Sylvia | ٠ | | | Paul Hervey Fox | ٠ | 128 |
| On Nights Like This. Verse | | | | Elizabeth E. Goodenow | , | 135 |
| The Cobra. Short Story . | | | | Clement Wood | | 136 |
| The Atoll. Verse | | | | John Curtis Underwood | | 152 |
| Daughters of Lilith. Verse . | | | | Berton Braley | | 153 |
| Ainslee's Books of the Month | | | | E. F. B | | 154 |
| In Broadway Playhouses . | | | | Dorothy Parker | | 155 |
| The Hebrew Scholar. A Portra | ait. | Verse | | Elias Lieberman | | 159 |
| Talks With Ainslee's Readers | | | | | | 160 |

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As a matter of fact, they would probably be working till as clerks, bookkeepers, mechanics, etc., if they had at learned about the National Salesmen's Training Association's system of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service, This is an organization of top-mich Salesmen and Sales Managers formed just for the Stope of showing men how to become Star Salesmen and fitting them into positions as City and Traveling Essenen.

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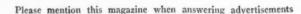
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XLVL

NOVEMBER, 1920.

No. 3.



The Gods of Unconvention

By Katharine Hill

Author of "The Predestined Lover,"
"The Pearl and the Técla"

N the station platform the Pullman conductor was the center of a small mob. The hands of the illuminated clock above him stood at half past nine and the New York train left at nine-thirty-five; travel was heavy just now, and there were no berths untaken, not even uppers. The harassed man could give satisfactory replies only to those passengers who had made reservations days ago.

Keith Randall, dearing the

Keith Randall, flearing the cluster of disgruntled people, smiled with a touch of complacence which must have been irritating to any of the less fortunate who noticed it. His, for a night and a part of the following day, was the drawing-room on car 157, his inalienably and alone. Ahead of him marched a porter with his big, extremely heavy leather suit case. Keith had reserved to his own carrying a smaller bag, trim and inconspicuous in shape, whose contents were presumably of greater price.

He dawdled as he walked, finding some Puckish amusement in watching the red face of a business man evidently accustomed to doing himself well, as it was borne in on him that he, even he, would have to spend the night sitting

up in a day coach, or else postpone a trip which was doubtless urgent.

But Randall's glance, shifting, rested next on a woman's face, and the amusement left it. He noticed of her, at that first moment, chiefly that she looked very tired, that she was colorless and slightly built, none of your modern amazons who can stand hardship better She was getting, perhaps, toward the end of her twenties. Keith didn't connect her, at this time, with the idea of beauty or even of allurement. It was pure chivalry toward her obvious fragility that made him stop, hesitate, listen to her short colloquy with the Pullman conductor in the hope that she might receive a favorable reply.

"Absolutely nothing, lady!"

She fell back, her face full of consternation, white, resentful, piteous. And even so Keith knew that she had probably not an idea of what was before her. Her clothes, which were not obtrusively smart, he noticed now to be of the quietly distinguished sort which securely placed women prefer for traveling; she had the air of the girl who is looked after, her comfort arranged for, her journeyings anything but haphazard.

oks

It was most unlikely that she had ever before spent a night in a day coach.

But Randall himself, recently enough for a still poignant memory, had been obliged to make the trip from Miami to New York during the railway strike. He had counted himself lucky to find a train moving at all, but the cumulative discomfort of the trip remained a horror from which his thought still winced away.

It was intolerable to him to imagine this delicate stranger sitting all night on a straight seat beside God knew whom, with the light glaring into her tired eyes, her head sliding on the seat back with every lurch of the train, waking with a jerk if for a moment she managed to fall asleep. There would be slamming car doors, too, shouts of the names of stations, fretful babies, no doubt. While all the time in his desirable drawingroom there would be no sound but the lulling, merged noises of the train's progress, while light and darkness would be the matter of a finger's pressure on a bulb, and a soft-cushioned, curtained berth would stand empty.

He was not quite self-sacrificing enough to be ready to change his lot for hers. Besides, there were other reasons, excellent reasons, forbidding this. But at least she should have the proffer of that empty berth. Convention? Where was the difference, essentially, between the shared drawing-room and a shared section, three feet away in the rar proper? Women are more sensible nowadays, thank God, than they used to be!

He went up to her on the quick im-

"I beg your pardon—I couldn't help overhearing that. He won't give you a berth, will he—and you're obliged to take this train?"

She was in the charged mood when the opportunity to voice the grievance is irresistible.

"Yes, isn't it outrageous!" She took

no count of the fact that he was a stranger, and certainly it hadn't occurred to her that he had a refuge to offer her. Her words poured out, low, seething.

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"Why can't they have berths enough for everybody? They must know that a lot of people will want to take this train! I suppose you're in the same situation that I am—and all these other people, all perfectly able and ready to pay for decent comfort in traveling. It's barbarous to make no provision, simply none at all! I can't think what it will be like in a day coach!"

"I can," he said, "because I once made such a trip, and it is—most uncomfortable, but that's not my situation tonight, happily. I was going to ask you—I have a drawing-room, and I'm by myself. I wonder if you'd care to take the lower berth?"

Her face flashed with eagerness, and then misgiving succeeded as, the white heat of her indignation appeased at this sudden offer of the comfort she clearly considered her due, she began to see the world normally again, and her accustomed inhibitions where strangers, particularly masculine strangers, were concerned, to act with their usual force. She hesitated, but she was terribly tempted, he saw.

He made a conscious effort to look ingenuous, trustworthy, and harmless.

"It's very good of you," she murmured, "but-"

"There's no earthly reason why you shouldn't, is there?" he urged. "Women nowadays——"

Her chin rose a little, her carriage stiffened.

"I'm going to accept your offer very gratefully!" she said. "Where is that man with my suit case?"

The porter was behind her, the train about to start, and the next moments were hurried ones. Then Mellicent Weir was sitting on the drawing-room sofa, the two negroes were tipped and departing, and in the clear light which

flooded the tiny compartment she and her host were able to see each other in more detail than the station dimness. with its high arc lamps and sweeping

shadows, had permitted.

Every fiber of her tired body was glad to be there, with the curtained berth, already made up for the night, waiting her scarcely three feet away, but it struck Miss Weir that the man to whom she was to owe her night's rest was not quite the ingenuous youth she had fancied him. Inspected now in a quick, searching glance which roved easily past him, he presented a man-of-the-world appearance modified by a suggestion of the unconventionality to which his invitation testified. He was splendidly built, with a bearing that was nothing less than princely, while it was observable from his clothes that he gave hardly any attention to his appearance. There was humor in his finely molded face, keenness, intellectual qualities to which Mellicent was the woman to give full value. A gentleman, beyond question. Oh, trustworthy, of course!

Keith at the same moment was apos-

trophizing himself amazedly.

"Not pretty! Now how on earth did you come to get the impression that she wasn't pretty? Why, she's the most fascinating thing you ever looked at! Just because she's not the tired business man's style? She's like an exquisite, long, cool little tea rose!"

He pulled his eyes away reluctantly. She was taking off here small, close hat and threading her fingers through the flattened ash-blond hair which was drawn straight back from her forehead to a full knot pinned rather low. The shape of her head, the setting of the ear, and the lines of the slim, fair throat, so outlined, were perfect. Looking into the glass, she caught the admiration in his face which he supposed not visible to her and so had not taken care to dissemble, and again she felt faintly uncomfortable, as she had done on the plat-

nt

form before his utterance of the words "Women nowadays-" had sounded to her the clarion of her passionately held convictions.

"Women nowadays," she told herself vehemently again, "are determined to meet men as equals and comrades, to deny by their every action the old assumption that they are sex creatures first, human beings secondarily and unimportantly, "Women nowadays" welcomed the equivocal situation as an opportunity to show themselves its mistresses; the triumphant dealing with it, not its avoidance, has become their point of honor.

It was Mellicent's misfortune that something in her shrank against her will from the test, and that all her life men had showed a lamentable proneness to take her as woman first, to find her personality more piquing than her opinions. This tendency on their part made her struggle sometimes unfairly more difficult than that of the bobbed-haired. horn-spectacled damsels of her affiliations.

Many men gave Mellicent a first glance and, like Keith, saw nothing arresting in her. Those who looked twice plumed themselves on their discernment of "points" likely to escape any but the connoisseur. Those who looked three times were in danger of being beglamoured and lost by the girl's unusual, subtle, and seductive loveliness. nose was not straight, but the nostrils were finely cut, her face was a shade narrow, the slate-gray eyes were set, by a hair's breadth, unevenly, but each defect was balanced and justified, and the result was a harmony more bewitching, once seen and appreciated, for its divergence from the more familiar patterns of feminine prettiness.

In pursuance of her ideals, Mellicent Weir would have liked to accept her isolation from the rest of the world with a strange man very nonchalantly, to talk to him without restraint, by her manner banishing any consciousness which might lurk in his mind, any recollection that they were here together like husband and wife. Although there was really no reason on earth, except that tissue of base assumptions against which she was in full revolt, why they should not be together in this way!

She was too tired, to-night, to play the rôle with spirit. She felt chilly and, in spite of her convictions, not quite

at her ease.

berth-why should you?"

He gestured horrified repudiation of any other arrangement. Then, to her dismay, he leaned toward her, a confidential expression in his eyes, a twitch of embarrassment about his mouth. He said something, something about turning out altogether and leaving her alone. He wouldn't, couldn't do that, for a reason which Mellicent did not catch because another train roared suddenly past theirs at the important moment. She drew back, smiling coldly. If what he had said had been inadmissible, as from his intimate dropping of his voice to say it she surmised, then to ask him to repeat it would be to encourage him to presume on his generosity. She pretended that she had understood and was not interested. He seemed a little chagrined, she thought.

"You don't like them, then?"

The question seemed to expect "no," and she said it with chilly positiveness.

"I'm very sorry!"

"I'll say good night." Mellicent ended the conversation abruptly, and withdrew behind her curtains.

She undressed, putting on over her crêpe de Chine nightgown a kimono of amber silk before lying down. The berth, an unusually comfortable one, felt

like a huge caress to her weary body. and her head, freed of hairpins, sank luxuriously against the piled soft pillows. She snapped out her light, raised her blind, and looked at the lights of the city they had left, like low-ranged sparks on the dark horizon. Above her she could hear Randall stirring, and fancy that she heard his voice in a low, runming murmur. Yet it couldn't be that he was addressing her, for she could catch no words, and certainly he was expecting no response. She almost laughed as it struck her that he might be saying his prayers up there. Was there anybody, nowadays, any man of outward sophistication, who knelt and said prayers before going to bed? After all, she knew absolutely nothing of this man beyond his name, which he had formally furnished her and for which she had exchanged her surname, and that he had a kind heart.

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He might be praying, or preparing to descend and murder her—he might be crazy, his unconventional approach to her an indication of it, or he might be entirely harmless, of course. He was entirely harmless, of course. But she knew absolutely nothing about him.

All the natural timidity which Mellicent despised in herself, abetted to-night by her fatigue, rose and disquieted her. She wished herself sitting rigidly and uncomfortably in the day car, in the company of travelers honest by force of

The train swayed, vibrating rhythmieally. Mellicent willed to keep awake, to meet what the night might bring in full consciousness. But she was very tired, and sleep presently snatched her consciousness away from her.

CHAPTER II.

She started wide awake out of an uneasy dream, of which the horrid sensation persisted of a touch upon her shoulder, the culmination and crystallization of all her waking and sleeping fears. She lay a moment immobile, breathing short and sharp, trying to regain calmness, telling herself that she was a fool, that a dream is nothing, that she had now to relax and go to sleep again.

But with every instant she was further from sleep, and she was wide awake when the little soft nudge came again.

Mellicent knew that she had not imagined it this time, and she shrank, turning to stare at the curtain, her mouth dry, her body breathless and pulseless. There was light enough from without to show the curtain's folds drawn taut to the edge of her pillow, as if from the other side a weight was being rested there. It was proof incontrovertible at which she looked, but it only certified to her senses the presence very close at hand, to the full knowledge of which she had awakened.

Her fear, on her again in full force, had a different quality this time, being mingled with indignation, contempt, and a strong sense of outrage. Her heart, after its minute's sick stoppage, began to shake her whole frame with its violent beating, her hands shook uncontrollably, but her brain was clear enough to plan and direct a desperate action. She moved her covers back stealthily, and writhed down soundlessly to the foot of the berth and crouched there, waiting, listening for a husky, hateful whisper which did not come, for the further lunging inward of the curtain.

She had timed herself by that, her fingers resting on the farthest edge of the curtain, ready to throw it back. In an instant she had done this and was out on the floor, had fumbled for and found the doorknob in the dark, had flung open the door, and rushed out into the narrow aisle of the sleeping car, uttering for all her efforts to restrain them a thin, frightened cry or two which she choked down by the aid of the dim lights, the familiar commonplace aspect of the green-curtained passage, above

all the knowledge of the two layers of hidden humanity to right and left of her.

She clutched a heavy green fold, leaned her weight on it, and sagged through a moment of relief. Then heads began to appear out of berths, the porter was in the path facing her and, idiotically, making Melkcent feel more than ever that she was hewilderedly wandering in a dream, a girl's voice exclaimed.

"Oh, what a beautiful pussycat!"
She turned, and crouching near her was, indeed, a Persian cat, the length of its yellow hair and the beauty of its plumy tail vivid against the dark-green carpet. Its enormous eyes were all black, their golden rim engulfed by the enlarged pupils. Its ears were flattened, and, as the porter stopped to pick it up, it leaped past his hands, inflicting a severe scratch with one powerful hind paw, and tore down the aisle, up a curtain, evoking screams from the woman behind it, down again and out of sight

under lower twelve.

At the same moment Keith Randall appeared in the doorway of the drawing-room, a dressing gown caught round his pajamas, his hair very rumpled, and his feet bare.

Mellicent, in all the tumult of her dismay and embarrassment before the completeness with which she had made a fool of herself, found room for the thought that his appearance alone convicted her of folly, that any schoolgirl should have known herself safe with that man. And she, a woman of twenty-seven, a writer of plays, an amateur of life, and a cosmopolitan in her own estimation, had read him capable of so crude a betrayal of her reluctant confidence!

The perception of her gross mistake scarcely made her present position more comfortable. Randall, hastily shuffling into slippers, was beside her now, showing very little interest in her, questioning the porter about the whereabouts

of the cat, and putting the same question to the stout lady who had screamed, and whose face—like a wife of Bluebeard's appearing bodiless near the roof —struck Mellicent as somehow vaguely familiar.

"Which way did she go? She couldn't get out on the platform, could she?"
"No. suh. I think she done went un-

der one of the berfs, suh."

"Lower twelve," said Bluebeard's wife, who was deeply interested.

Keith smote his forehead.

"Who've you got in lower twelve? Man or woman?"

"Lady, suh."

Randall turned to Mellicent.

"Then—I'm sorry, you told me you don't like cats—but will you just speak to her and tell her I have to get under her berth? This is the limit, rousing the car like this! I don't understand yet what happened!"

He was scarlet, puzzled, resentful, but determined evidently to regain the cat.

Mellicent—she could do no less—leaned into the berth to make difficult explanations to the indignant occupant, and when the curtains had been looped up out of the way Keith somewhat ridiculously prostrated himself in the aisle and began to address wooing remarks to two faintly luminous green circles in the farthest corner of the section's floor.

It was the same running, soothing patter that she had listened to earlier in the evening, and had mistaken for prayer.

"Come, beautiful one! Come to your lover and slave! There's nothing to be afraid of."

He stretched a long arm under the berth, with coaxing, extended fingers.

"Nothing is going to hurt my Pasht. We're going back to our safe little room with the door shut, if I have to give this black rascal here a five-spot to keep him from tipping off the conductor. Come out, beautiful child!"

And at last he rose triumphant, with

a mass of yellow fur caught to his breast.

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"I beg everybody's pardon," he said, for half the passengers were watching for the end of the comedy. "I'm extremely sorry you were disturbed. I'm not clear yet just how the cat managed to get out, but it shan't happen again."

"Your wife let it out," asserted Upper Six. "She ran out screaming first—

nightmare, I guess."

Mellicent felt a shock at her heart to hear herself called Keith's wife, opened her mouth to deny it, waited for him to disclaim it. But what he said was, astonishingly and distinctly:

"Then you needn't worry. My wife never had nightmare more than once

in the same night."

He stood aside that she might go before him into the drawing-room.

CHAPTER III.

"Most unfortunate," Keith observed dryly when they were alone.

Mellicent's fair skin was burning, wave after wave of scorching heat surging through her. Did he understand of what she had suspected him? did he really accept the forced explanation of the nightmare? Aside from this, they had been bracketed together as man and wife in the eyes of a carful of people, and her costume, though it was graceful and becoming beyond Mellicent's realization, was not that in which one would choose to confront an almost stranger in compromising stances.

"I suppose," he went on, "that Pasht frightened you. Perhaps you have a real 'phobia' about cats—some people I know do. If you had told me so I should not, of course, have let her out, although I told you what a sensitive and high-bred creature she is, how frantic the noise and confinement make her, and how I really took the drawing-room on her account, so that at least

she could prowl around and satisfy herself about her surroundings. I dare say it seems to you ridiculous to make such a fuss about a cat. But they are very nervous and high-strung animals, and traveling is real torment to them. I am afraid I would not dare shut her up again now. She might have a fit and die in her valise, after all this extra excitement."

Mellicent became aware that the veiled hostility in his manner toward her was due less to resentment at the recent disturbance she had caused than to his impression that she didn't like cats, and scorned his own feeling for them as effeminate, and without considering the consequences she exclaimed:

"But of course I like cats! How is it possible to love beauty and subtlety and mystery, and not like their living embodiment?"

"But——" He stared. "When I asked you this evening, you said you disliked them—most positively!"

"I didn't catch what you said," she admitted, already half seeing now that she had better have left him to his misunderstanding.

"Oh! Then you—— Oh! I see. You didn't know there was a cat here at all!"

While he stared before him, frowning slightly as he put two and two together, Pasht slipped out of his arms and, with the persistence of her kind, jumped again into the lower berth. It pleased her, and, selecting the central lowest part of it, still faintly warm from Mellicent's body, she made herself at home there, settled down, and tucked her paws under her body.

"Well! That's rather too much of a good thing!" Keith began.

"Oh! Leave her there," Mellicent said quickly. "We'd better both be going back to bed again, hadn't we? I shall manage."

She slipped into the berth beside the

cat, drew her curtains, and lay and arraigned herself.

What a fool she had been, what a Victorian ninny, and what a crass suspiciousness had been hers throughout! She went over her mistakes with branding self-contempt. She should have asked him in the first place to repeat the remark she had not understood. Failing that, and feeling what she could only conclude to be his touch on her shoulder in the night, she should have been sure at once that he was rousing her for some legitimate reason, that some accident had necessitated his waking her. Instead of that she had imagined a melodrama! She knew that all her life she must remember this night with hot cheeks and confusion.

But last, worst of all, was the needless making clear to him of what she had thought, by which her ignominy was carried beyond her own soul's tribunal, by which she must stand before Keith Randall with all her suspicions exposed—suspicions as shameful to herself as they were insulting to him.

She need never see him again, of course, after to-morrow. But there would be several hours before the train reached New York, when they must sit opposite each other and talk a little, with the memory of the night vivid in the minds of both. It would be difficult to avoid breakfasting with him.

Pasht started and trembled as the engine of another train hurtled past them with a savage, hissing roar, and Mellicent laid a hand on her fur to quiet her. Strange to hold this little animal, the intimate companion of the man above her whom she meant never to see again, in her own arms like this tonight! It was rather nice of him, she thought, to feel so sensitively the nervous sufferings to which most men are entirely callous.

If she had met him in any other circumstances, Mellicent felt that she would have liked Keith Randall well enough. She recalled his face, its strong lines, satisfactory planes, and the strong, quick curves of eye socket and upper lip. He was better than handsome; he looked interesting.

So Mellicent thought now of the man whom she had lain in the same spot suspecting, half an hour before, of villainy. But what must he be thinking of her?

Above her, had she but known it, Keith, wakeful, too, was envying Pasht.

CHAPTER IV.

Randall had felt a not unnatural annoyance when the reason for Miss Weir's flight into the main part of the car had dawned upon him. In suggesting the night's arrangement he had realized that he was asking her to brave convention, but it had not for a moment occurred to him that she might imagine she had anything more palpable to fear.

He admired women who disregarded convention, and had been much influenced by a thin volume of one-act plays that he had come across a year or two before, in which original heroines played forceful parts in defiance of tradition. These plays, at once so honest, so subtle, and so effective, had made him more dissatisfied than before with his own work.

He had always, of course, hated his books, as writers consciously addressing a public of cultivation lower than their own, make a point of doing, but Keith Randall considered that he had every excuse for having written six of The first one had been begun immediately upon leaving college, as a distraction after the disappointing end of his first serious love affair, and in the book the same love affair had progressed to a different conclusion. In it he was shamelessly sentimental and youthfully world-weary by turns, and-since at twenty-two success seems the most natural thing in the world-Keith was not at all surprised to find his absurd produc-

tion elevated into a best seller, although by the time his royalties began to come in he had already begun to scoff at the work which earned them.

He was thinking seriously of doing an entirely different kind of thing, when the senior Randall died at an unfortunate moment for his financial operations, leaving an estate so entangled that even his life insurance had to go to meet obligations involving his honor.

At this crisis, in face of his mother's helpless inability to understand how a household could be conducted on less than forty thousand a year, with the claims of an expensive and brilliantly frivolous young sister before him. Keith agreed precipitately to the magnificent terms his publisher offered him for a second book as nearly as possible like the first. He had kept on writing them under the same compulsion, but his mother had died a year ago, and Ethel was at last married. Keith had dowered her with the rights of his last and worst book, and was now bound for New York and a Grove Street garret, where with his cat for muse he might at last try his hand at the truthful and artistic work which, he knew well enough, would not do more than keep himself in bread and cheese and Pasht in raw liver and fish.

It was no part of his plan to fall in love. Associations of the bohemian sort might be well enough, but any serious passion leading up to marriage would, of course, play the devil with his writing. Man is, however, where woman is concerned, the most will-less of beings, and Keith, recognizing perfectly that, since he was vowed to art, it behooved him like a monk to look at the ground when he addressed a woman, was making no plans at all for the avoidance of Miss Weir, but thinking of things he would say to her at breakfast, of a progress in intimacy during the morning which should lead naturally to permission to call on her in New York.

He could not, he thought with chagrin, have made a happy impression on her so far, or she would not have been so ready to believe the worst when the cat jumped into her berth, would have investigated, questioned, surely, and discovered the innocent character of the invader before taking the whole car into her confidence. Did he look like a thug on a cursory glance, he asked himself in some distress. He even went so far as to pull out his electric-light bulb and scrutinize himself in the strip of mirror between the windows. The face he saw whenever he shaved looked familiar enough, human and friendly to his partial eyes. It didn't occur to Keith that any one could call it handsome. But he remembered uneasily the things Ethel was accustomed to say about his clothes, and he realized that without her sisterly censoring he had probably lapsed in that regard below even his usual level.

Perhaps the girl below him had been half asleep, perhaps she was really subject to nightmares, and Pasht's leap had synchronized with a particularly horrid crisis.

Still, he fancied hypercritically that the writer of those truthful, terrible little plays—for some one had told him that M. Weir was a woman—would have met the situation very differently. The same name, too, though of course the girl in the lower berth might spell hers differently. But then, most likely the writer of those plays was plain, and forty. Of loveliness like her name-sake's, Keith realized, so much must not be demanded.

In the body of the car a third person lay awake for some time after the agitation had subsided, surmising, recalling, and dovetailing with excited interest.

Mrs. Baxter adored Keith Randall's novels, and whenever in some semiliterary magazine she came across a picture of him, it was her habit to cut it out and paste it lovingly in the flyleaf of

one of his books; it had never occurred to her to regard these facsimiles of the face its owner had been examining so dubiously as anything but an unquestionable decoration. To meet him was one of her dreams, and she had recognized him with incredulity which became palpitating conviction, as she framed her own double-chinned countenance in the folds of her curtain, and watched lynxlike all that passed until the door of the drawing-room closed at last behind the interesting trio.

She recognized Mellicent, also, with even greater certainty, for she had been introduced to Miss Weir as the guest of honor at a recent function of the Drama League, which Nita Baxter supported with fervently written checks and an honest effort to understand what the movement was driving at. She herself really enjoyed a roaring bedroom farce better than any piece of Scandinavian gloom she had ever witnessed, but she had the humblest disbelief in her own taste, and a sincere admiration for the people who were trying to uplift it. Mellicent Weir, as one of these illustrious ones, she was proud to have met, but she did not expect that Miss Weir should remember her.

What kept her awake was the delightful stimulus of actually sharing with these two interesting and brilliant persons something which she felt sure was as yet a secret as regarded everybody else. She could not have helped hearing about it—she who read religiously all the personal items in newspapers and weeklies, who spent her days gossiping and hearing gossip about people she knew and people she didn't know—if either Keith Randall or Mellicent Weir had got married, let alone the doubly fascinating circumstance of their having married each other.

She lay in her berth and thrilled to the core with the romance of the thing. A secret marriage! Randall's books bristled with them, and with marriages between strangers to secure legacies under eccentric wills, and with all the other tried and true devices which save the writer so much brain fag in inventing original complications. It didn't strike Nita that there was any discrepancy of literary standing between Keith Randall and Mellicent Weir. To her, to be well known was to be a genius, and she was innocently proud that in the case of Randall, at least, she was able without any effort to appreciate genius.

She planned, of course, to spend her first day in New York in telling every-body she knew that Randall and Mellicent were married. They must have been married for some time, too, and her titbit a mere advance information of something that would be announced to everybody in a few days, for the man had spoken of his wife's nightmares with a positiveness that must have been the result of months, if not years, of observation.

Mrs. Baxter waited next morning until she was faint with hunger for the interesting pair to go in to breakfast, when she meant to follow them immediately and watch them lovingly at their meal, noticing what each ate and overhearing as much as possible of their conversation. She was much disconcerted when breakfast came to them, instead, and she had to go to the diner and eat her own, without that charming spectacle before her.

But there had been, much earlier, a kimonoed tête-à-tête in the dressing room with Mellicent, which made up for

much.

Most women will talk while their hair is down and the cold cream still glistening on their faces, and Nita craftily refrained from reminding Miss Weir of the Drama League luncheon, and drew her into a little conversation on the mere common ground of femininity in a Pullman sleeper.

Mellicent, who had no cold cream to wash off, felt nevertheless a rush of friendliness toward this fat, easy-mannered person of her own sex, after the complications and embarrassments of the night, and she responded freely enough.

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Yes, a drawing-room was better than an upper berth, but even in a drawingroom there was not much space to spare. No, thank Heaven, she was never car sick!

"Your husband thinks a lot of that cat, doesn't he?" Nita asked, flinging her towel into the receptacle, and heginning to unbraid her red, brownrooted hair.

Mellicent bit her lip and shook her own hair over her face before she answered.

"Yes, he's devoted to it."

"It always looks funny to me to see a man devoted to a cat," said Nita. "Seems so much more natural somehow for them to like dogs. But, of course, I know lots of artistic geniuses are eccentric about things like that. There's William Gillette, now. I've heard he's real fond of cats!"

"Artistic geniuses?" murmured Melli-

cent in bewilderment.

Her reading was in fact so selective that the name of Keith Randall had meant absolutely nothing to her. But even if she had read every one of his published novels, she would undoubtedly have repeated Nita's words with exactly the same intonation of perplexity.

"Well, now, just because you're his wife, Mrs. Randall, you don't have to pretend you don't know he's a genius! I just love his books! I just loved the last one, 'Sweet and Twenty.' But 'Archer's Folly' is my favorite. Which one is your favorite, Mrs. Randall?"

"Oh-ah-that one you last named is mine, too."

Nita was delighted.

"Really! Think of your liking it best, too! That shows I have got good taste, doesn't it? I never did have much

education," she rambled on, making up her face artlessly with rouge and powder which suited neither each other nor her natural complexion. "But since my husband began to make money hand over fist I've been doing what I could. I belong to the Delphian Society and the Mentor Association, and I read all the uplifting literature I can get hold of, and go to all the uplifting plays."

She would have trenched upon Mellicent's playlets in another minute, but Miss Weir, placing her last hairpin and dusting powder on and off her face with more haste than care, had fled.

CHAPTER V.

She returned to the drawing-room, now in process of conversion to day-time uses, with a somewhat sulky expression which happened to suit her better than it suits most people. Keith observed it with mixed appreciation and distress.

"I beg your pardon—is anything the matter?" he asked, when the porter had finished and gone.

"I'm not sure that I like being Mrs. Randall," Mellicent said. "I've been talked to in that character by an awful woman in the dressing room. You might at least have mentioned that you are a genius. It's embarrassing to learn a thing like that about one's husband from an outsider!"

"A genius! I!" Keith turned scarlet, finding the charge the more disconcerting because of that secret hope of his that, after all, in controversion of everything he had ever yet printed, he might some day turn out to be a genius. "I assure you I'm nothing of the kind."

"But you do write?"

"Oh, heavens, for money! Things I blush for. I'm sorry you were annoyed in the dressing room."

"Was it really necessary to tell people that I was your wife?"

"Well—I couldn't very well tell them that you weren't, could I?"

She was silent, and his resentment rose. The expression of discontent had not left her face, and it seemed to him that she was blaming him most unfairly.

"My attempt at making your journey more comfortable seems to have been a failure all around," he said coldly. "I'm immensely sorry, but I hope you'll believe that my intentions at least were good."

"Oh, of course I know it was all my fault!" Her tone was sharp. "I should have known better than to accept such an offer in the first place."

Prospects for the morning seemed about as bad as they could be. Mellicent entertained for a moment the idea of ending the unpleasant scene by going to breakfast alone, and got as far as to open the door of the drawing-room, when Mrs. Baxter's hopeful, watchful face, turned toward her with the alertness of a waiting dog, made her shrink back again. The woman would follow her, she knew, and talk and talk.

Breakfast with Randall imposed the obligation of surface amenities at least, and they talked of indifferent things in a way that was friendly enough. Keith for his part soon got over his vexation at what had struck him as a bit of gratuitous injustice. Her voice, when free from embarrassment or anger seemed to him singularly sweet; it had the singing cadences rare in American voices, and her face in the daylight beguiled his eye more compellingly even than it had done last night.

Mellicent, constrained at first, had with her second cup of coffee taken a resolve which loosened her tongue. On arriving in New York she would lose this man, lose him ruthlessly, and if, before the journey ended, he went so far as to ask permission to call, she would give him a false address. She had told him her surname only, and it alone, though she was in a small way well

known, could hardly serve to identify her in a city of seven millions.

The decision lightened her mood enormously. If she was never to see this man again, it no longer mattered greatly that she should have been compromised with and before him, and she could afford to forgive him for having innocently caused her to make a fool of herself. She began to talk with the unreserve induced by the transient intimacy of boat or train.

Keith was increasingly charmed, and he found himself presently telling her something of his own ambitions, repudiating his published books and urging her not to read them, but with a sketched outline of their excuse for be-

ng.

"The question would be," she said thoughtfully, her eyes resting on his face with a speculation which was flattering, "whether it's possible, having done bad work deliberately, ever afterward to do good. I'm accepting your word for it that your books are bad. It would be interesting to see whether you can cut loose from the fatal, facile sort of thing I imagine you've been doing."

It was Keith's opportunity, and he in-

terposed:

"If I do produce something I'm satisfied with, then—I wonder if you'd let me send it to you?"

There was a hesitation long enough to be awkward before Mellicent exclaimed brightly and insincerely:

"Oh, please do!"

Her mood of happy forgetfulness was shattered by the question. She disliked lying, but had taken her determination not to continue this man's acquaintance so fiercely that the liking she had begun in spite of herself to feel for him could not even induce her to reëxamine it.

He persisted:

"You'll give me your address then? And must I wait for what may be an eternity before I—come to see you?" It was a distinct encreachment, for what had been spoken of before was sending, not bringing; but Mellicent, committed now to her perjury, did not cavil at this. Feeling base, she gave at random two groups of numbers separated by the word "West," and Keith in all good faith jotted them down in his notebook, and then asked for the telephone number as well.

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She was not prepared for this question, and the natural response to it, the entirely truthful answer, slipped out to her annovance when she realized what she had done. It was only the telephone, though, and one could simply disavow being Miss Weir, if he called up, or rather when, for there could be no doubt he meant to do so. But she wanted to forget him, to blot out of her memory the whole ignominious little incident, to regard it as if it had not Now any hour, any moment, been. she might be reminded of it and be forced to lie again. Gloom descended on her once more, and Keith wondered how he had ever dared to ask if he might call.

They were nearing New York now. With relief Mellicent put on her hat, was helped into her coat and brushed unnecessarily by the porter. Then there was the business of getting Pasht, happy enough this morning while at large, except when a train passed on the next track, again into the neat dark bag with the inconspictious holes at one end, which to a cursory glance looked as if it contained collars and hairbrushes rather than a very indignant cat.

In another minute the porter had gathered up Mellicent's suit case and Randall's together, and on the platform presently a redcap had them both.

"D'you want a taxi?" Keith asked.

"Or are you being met?"

"A taxi," she said, foreseeing no difficulties, and then there was a disconcerting minute when, having put her into the cab, he waited for the address to give the driver, having naturally not memorized it, and Mellicent, with less recollection than his of the numbers she had uttered, fumbled blankly to the brilliant solution of:

"Oh, to Fifth Avenue, first—there's something I must get at—"

He had shaken hands with her through the open half of the door, she had wriggled her fingers into a hole for farewell to Pasht, he had lifted his hat and turned away, when Mellicent felt a sudden rush of regret for her own ruthless action, and leaned forward for a last glimpse of him as the taxi started, with some half idea of calling him back. How nice he was, after all! How companionable, how intelligent! And how very rare really nice men were, in her experience, in a world even embarrasingly filled with really nice women. If they were satisfactory to look at, the men she had known, there was something crude or something callous about them almost inevitably, and if they had perceptions and intelligence and sensitiveness, there was almost always something ridiculous about their appearance.

But Randall was out of sight in the crowd, and she had to go on and pre-

tend to buy something.

Keith, who wanted a taxi, too, had been about to step into the one next to Mellicent's, when he observed the interested lady of the sleeping car bearing

down upon him, and paused.

"Oh, Mr. Randall! Excuse me, but your wife and I had such a pleasant talk this morning! I wanted to tell her good-by, and to ask her to come and see me. Was that her that just got into the taxi? Isn't that just my luck? Couldn't you both come to dinner some night and make a party and go to the theater?"

"She had to do some shopping," he said readily enough. "I just sent her off in one taxi, and I'm taking the cat straight home in another myself."

"Oh, I see! Well, you'll give her

my messages, won't you? And she didn't have time to give me the address—but, of course, one can always reach Mellicent Weir! Do forgive me—but it isn't generally known, is it?"

He had been thinking rapidly, aghast at her revealed familiarity with Miss Weir's name and connections. It was one thing that a negligible, talkative woman should go about telling people that he, Keith Randall, had been encountered traveling with a "wife," and quite another that stories should be set going about the girl from whom he had just parted. There was only one thing to be done, to throw himself on Mrs. Baxter's mercy.

"It's quite a secret," he told her earnestly. "I do beg of you not to speak of it! We shall be more than grateful

if you will not."

"I'll be as silent as the tomb!" she promised delightedly. "I won't tell a soul! It's one of these romantic secret marriages, isn't it, where nobody knows you're married?"

"Thanks immensely. Then we shall rely on you not to mention it," Keith said, and, leaning into the waiting taxi, he placed Pasht's bag on the seat and prepared to follow it.

"And you will come to dinner?"

"Oh, yes—oh, yes—with the greatest pleasure!"

CHAPTER VI.

Leaving a shop and entering her taxi again, Mellicent gave the chauffeur her actual street and house number, both barely in their teens, and was driven down the Avenue with the sense of homecoming which, without any justification at all, it always brought her. For the home of her birth and upbringing was in Pittsburgh, and another Fifth Avenue should have enjoyed a monopoly of inspiring in her such feelings.

The thought of that thoroughfare left her cold. At sixteen, sent to boarding school in New York, Mellicent Weir had recognized it as her soul's city, made friends there, clamored to stay on and study music, study art, study medicine, anything that would put off the return to Pittsburgh. The wishes of her family had prevailed, however, and she had gone back to be the central figure of a brilliant coming-out party, and of a succession of entertainments given for her by her mother, her married sister, an aunt of unequal social importance, and their friends.

Her success was uneven, and she incurred some unpopularity by talking of Pittsburgh as a place of exile. But she already manifested that quality of hers of attracting hardly any attention except from those few people whom she left with no attention for anybody else, and if other girls had more competitors for their dances, Mellicent had probably more serious proposals than

any débutante of her year.

She accepted one of them and, finding that being kissed got on her nerves, resurrected the Victorian maxim on the subject and announced that she would not be kissed again until after the ceremony. The theory is not accepted in Pittsburgh, and, to the sensitiveness of her lover her coldness proved, not the adorable maidenliness of Mellicent, but, quite conclusively, the simple truth of the matter; that she wasn't in the least in love with him. The engagement was broken, with a feeling of injury on his side and relief on hers.

It was characteristic of Miss Weir that all during this affair she was at work on her first one-act piece, which concerned a girl who offers herself to an actor with whom she is infatuated with the express waiving of any ceremony at all, with the appearance of a threatening and remonstrating brother, and the heroine's vindication of her right to do as she pleases with her own life. The play, young enough in conception, was cleverly and truthfully ex-

ecuted, and performed, to the scandal of Pittsburgh, by the dramatic club to which Mellicent belonged.

A little later, a younger sister having reached eighteen and shown every readiness to accompany their frivolous mother on her tireless social round, Mellicent successfully declared her own independence, and won permission to go to New York to live, taking an old family servant with her, having her own apartment, and giving herself to her work. In two or three years more her family began to come across respectful references to Mellicent in quite pretentious periodicals. A Pittsburgh paper boasted of her as a Pittsburgh playwright, and when she visited her family. affairs were arranged for her by serious organizations, and she was asked to speak, and to the amazement of her relatives did speak, at meetings of a heavily intellectual character.

She was always glad to get back to New York, to her apartment which was one floor of a beautifully built old house, having finely proportioned rooms and admirable doors and windows and mantels. It had been modernized with electric light, baths, and kitchen appliances which satisfied even Emily, accustomed to the magnificence in that department as in every other of the Pittsburgh house, and in a hectic and unforgetable month now five years past, Mellicent had furnished her rooms with regard to nothing but her own taste, the bills going like all bills in her experience to a father who paid them without a murmur.

She came back to her apartment today with the added sense of pleasure in it which a visit to Pittsburgh always induced. This time, too, there had been friction in Pittsburgh, disapproval of a rather outrageous play she had lately written, demands on her that she couldn't acquiesce in. She had stifled, half quarreled with them all, and to

avoid quite quarreling, had fled. She

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had meant to stay with a friend at Siwickly, and had found on arrival that events had moved faster with Gertrude than she had surmised. It was Gertrude's husband who received her, with the news that Gertrude had left him, and he seemed inclined to blame Mellicent for the circumstance. He had been unable or unwilling to furnish his wife's address, and Mellicent had to choose between going back to Pittsburgh and taking up her differences with her family where she had left them, and coming home to New York.

If, during certain moments of the night, she had regretted that she had chosen as she did, she could only be glad now, looking about her, breathing the peace of the rooms that expressed and welcomed her. Emily was a priceless maid and the apartment house was immaculate, fresh, orderly, but not repellantly tidy. The window boxes were newly filled, a clear little fire burned pleasantly in the writing room, and luncheon was all but ready.

Mellicent was interrupted at the meal by the ringing of the telephone.

"Oh, Emily!" she said hastily, as the maid crossed the room to answer. "If that's a man, ask who it is, and if it's a Mr. Randall, this is the wrong number!"

"Yes, Miss Mellicent," Emily said imperturbably, but a moment later even her professional calm showed a little shakiness; she backed away from the telephone with a terrified:

"Yes, ma'am. I'll tell her, ma'am."
Mellicent sensed trouble even before
she picked up the receiver, and Mrs.
van Zant's molten words began to tumble after each other along the scorching
wires to her startled ears.

"I think it is absolutely outrageous, Mellicent Weir, for you to go about corrupting young people with your vile modern opinions! I have called you up to tell you what I think of you, and I am writing your mother to the same

effect to-day. I attribute Hilda's be-havior entirely to you!"

"But what has Hilda done, cousin Caroline?"

"You will learn fast enough what Hilda has done. She left my house half an hour ago, avowedly to take refuge with you—because it was your plays and your talk that disgusted her with our simple, wholesome life! I consider it an abuse of hospitality on your part to have made your visit to us last summer an occasion for airing your views before that impressionable child. I should never have allowed your plays to come into the house if I had had any idea what they were like!"

"Then you've been reading them now? That's very kind of you!"

"Hilda informed me that she meant to emulate one of your heroines, and I needed to ascertain what the depraved creature had done. Otherwise I certainly should waste no time reading such wicked trash!"

"Which heroine?" Mellicent asked faintly, her heart sinking as she tried unsuccessfully to recall even one heroine who conducted herself as one would wish to see one's girl relatives doing.

"Madeline was the name. She goes to live with a married man, to begin with, and——"

Mrs. van Zant raved on for some moments until spirit revived in Mellicent under the torrent of abuse and she cried:

"Really, I don't see why I should listen to this!"

Then she hung up the receiver and went back to a meal which seemed to her much less tempting than it had before the interruption.

She had still Hilda's side to hear, and if the girl had left home half an hour ago, she might be here at any minute. Mellicent sent away what remained of luncheon, to be warmed and augmented for the expected guest, and in the hope of reassurance took down from the shelf

the volume which contained the short play dealing with Madeline; but skimming through it brought consternation instead.

That which seems admirable when said and done by an invented heroine may appear actually reprehensible when cousin Caroline's daughter talks of doing it, and when presently Hilda van Zant burst in for sympathy and encouragement, Mellicent received her with more than a touch of reserve.

"Mother's so narrow-minded—she and I will never understand each other in a thousand years! You will let me stay with you, won't you, Mellicent? She actually said that Arthur Disbrow was not to come to the house, and she gave the servants orders not to let him

in!"

"Arthur Disbrow!"

"Den't you remember I told you all about him? I adore him, and he adores me. Just because he's married, mother thinks I ought to give him up! Did you ever hear of anything so Victorian?"

"But, Hilda--"

Mellicent bit her lip over the instinctive protest; happily Hilda hadn't heard it. She was careering along, full speed ahead, the food Emily had brought in disregarded, her cigarettes produced, and the sprinkle of ashes already piling up on the edge of the saucer under her teacup.

"I owe so much to you, Mellicent, dear. You know, I used to accept all their quaint démodés standards, never thinking for myself. As I told mother this morning, it was that glorious little play of yours about that splendid Madeline which made me see how weak and silly it would be of me to give up Arthur. I know some of her speeches by heart. I said them to mother, and you should have seen her! She was simply green with rage!" Then she quoted:

"Woman nowadays is no longer to be subdued by the old man-made preachments. On the touchstone of her own soul she has tested them and found them honeycombed with flaws. My love is a gift, and I will not make a contract of sale for it."

"Hilda, please! I can't stand hearing my own work quoted. That was almost the first thing I wrote, and I'm not one bit proud of it."

"Oh, why, I think it's splendid!"

Mellicent played absently with a salt spoon, dribbling salt on the tablecloth and then secoping it up again. Why did she have so strongly this sneaking, unavowable sympathy with cousin Caroline, this feeling that Hilda was talking nonsense, and that Arthur Disbrow, if he had made love to her, was a cad for doing so? It was her own doctrine that the girl was excitedly expounding to her, and when she was not actually quoting word for word, her nearest approach to originality was a paraphrase of something Mellicent had more than once said.

"Life at home's so stifling, so deadening! Mother wants me to be a parasite just as she's always been, to marry and follow the same hopeless round. Thank God I'm twenty-one! If you'll keep me, she can't do anything, and I can see Arthur and we can decide about things."

"And if I hadn't been here? It's just chance I didn't stay in Pittsburgh for another week."

"Then, of course, I'd have gone straight to him!"

"You know, Hilda," Mellicent began reluctantly, "this is a step which will affect your whole life, and you're very young, you're terribly inexperienced! I'm not sure—"

"Inexperienced!" Hilda leaned forward and declaimed triumphantly, "'Experience is always warping, since in the nature of things it must always be limited. Only an infinite experience could be as trustworthy as the sure, unbiased judgment of youth's utter inexperience!"

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Having written this aphorism herself. Mellicent naturally found it annoving

to have it quoted against her.

"Sure, unbiased poppycock!" cried. "You're a baby, and you're playing with fire! Your mother is perfectly right, and if you think I'm going to help you to see Arthur Disbrow. you're wrong! I shouldn't dream-"

Hilda's young, steady, contemptuous stare was hard to meet. Mellicent faltered into silence under it, and there was an uncomfortable pause which Hilda ended by an insulting little laugh. "So it's true, then! Several people

told me so, Arthur himself told me so, but I believed in you!"

"What is true?" Mellicent asked de-

fensively.

"That you're a four-flusher-that all your radicalism goes into your writings and you're contemptibly conventional That you're a Victorian yourself. really at heart, and that you profess the modern ideas for the advertisement you can get out of them, or maybe you kid yourself into believing you actually do think that way, but you don't-not a little bit! You say you believe in birth control. What did you ever do for it but use the idea in a play, and maybe write a ten-dollar check or two? You talk about free love, and when I come to you for help you tell me vou're on mother's side-not mine! I don't believe you ever even so much as walked in a suffrage parade for your opinions, though one would think that was respectable enough for anybody!"

Mellicent heard her to the end, rather white. There was too much truth in the indictment to allow it to pass unanswered, and the incidents of the night before gave it a force that it might have lacked if delivered a day earlier. She stood up and caught Hilda's arm as the girl reached for her flung-down fur.

"Don't go, Hilda-wait. I- There may be a lot in what you say. If there is, I want to know it, to change it."

She passed her hand over her forehead, smoothing back her hair.

"I've always seen myself as a sort of courier, a forerunner, a free, cleareved spirit denying all tradition. what you say is true, I'm a contempti-

ble humbug!"

"Oh, not as bad as that," said Hilda uncomfortably, disarmed by Mellicent's acceptance of her reproaches. "Only I do think you ought to try to be consist-Anybody who wrote that play about Madeline ought to help me to see Arthur. If you don't think those things, you oughtn't to write them. If you do think them, you ought to live up to your principles."

Mellicent was reveling now in a pleasure new to her, the voluptuous pleasure of self-abasement. If she came to it by unusual channels, she nevertheless wallowed in her self-scorn with all

sincerity.

Her convictions were all right, and she held them passionately. Here no revision was necessary; the regrettable thing was that she had never, in the essentials, lived up to them. She had shirked gracefully the unpleasant practical side of all the movements she had associated herself with, just as Hilda had accused her of doing, and it helped nothing that at the time she had believed her own excuse, that she could give more effective help by her writing than by carrying the banner in the market place.

A Victorian at heart!

The sting of the description lav. of course, in its truth. Once confronted with it, Mellicent had to acknowledge it, to admit, because there was no blinking it, the horrid fact that in any given situation it was her instinct to behave like a perfect lady. Sometimes, as last night, she combated her instinct successfully. But oftener she must just have blinded herself to her own inconsistency, and it was her punishment that while the aunt Carolines regarded her with horror, the people for whose opinion she really cared were speaking of her, in Hilda's cruel words, as a "fourflusher."

It happens quite often, and not on Tanuary first alone, that men and women take stock of their lives and tendencies and resolve with or without prayer on a different future conduct. But reformations like the one to which Mellicent pledged herself that afternoon are rare. She resolved, not, indeed, to behave badly, but to behave in accordance with a morality which Mrs. van Zant at least must have condemned, to act by the light of reason, distrusting the instincts which had remained atavistic; she resolved no longer to reap unearned the credit of her daring opinions, but to pay in the cash of actual service to her gods of unconvention.

CHAPTER VII.

Of course Hilda stayed.

There was a humorous side to her choice of Mellicent's apartment as a refuge in which to meet Disbrow, for, long before Mrs. van Zant had forbidden the artist her house, Miss Weir had driven him away with contumely from hers. It had been no surprise to her to learn from Hilda that he had found her disappointingly conventional; she remembered too well the occasion on which she had disappointed him.

Reviewing the horrid little scene now with critical eyes for her own behavior, Mellicent had to admit that she had been unduly angry. She had every right, of course, to refuse to go away with him as he asked, but none whatever to resent his asking her, to feel insulted by what no woman of her professed views should have found insulting. Marriage is a contract relating to property. Religious sanctions or denunciations are meaningless if you have no religion. There was really no question involved except whether she did or didn't care for Arthur Disbrow, a question which he had every right, surely, to put to her!

She wrote to him that night, mailing her note with Hilda's long, fat letter. nat

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Dear Arthur Disbrow: I have been thinking over what happened just before I went away, and I think it is due you to tell you that I no longer feel about it as I did. Much that I said to you was quite unjustifiable, and inconsistent with my own philosophy.

If you can forgive the unkind and undeserved reproaches with which I accompanied my unchanged refusal, I shall be glad to see you at any time as a friend. Very sincerely, MELLICENT WEIR.

The man who with eager incredulity had snatched her square, gray envelope from beneath Hilda's plump, brown one, read and reread what she had written, putting a more favorable construction on it with each reading.

He was smirking presently with the assurance that she meant to encourage him to repeat his proposals. Her fair, sensitive face rose before him alluringly. His feeling for her six weeks before had amounted to infatuation, and he had only begun to succeed in thinking less about her, with the aid of the flirtation with Hilda van Zant. Her note naturally plunged him back again into those intensities which had ended so disastrously.

He determined, however, in this renascence of his hopes, to conduct himself more wilily than he had done before, and, instead of rushing around to her apartment as soon as he was free to do so, and stormily renewing his love-making—Hilda's presence, too, made this course the less eligible—he telephoned a guarded request that she would dine with him at a restaurant frequented by many of the people whom both knew.

"It's nice of you to ask me," Mellicent's voice came to him, making his heart beat quicker with its remembered cadences. "You do forgive me, then?" "Isn't it the other way around?"

"No, Arthur, it is not. You were natural and sincere, and I was illiberal and inconsistent. I am ashamed of myself. Well, Hilda and I will meet you there, then, at half past seven!"

"Hilda? Oh, Hilda van Zant. Oh, she's stopping with you, isn't she? Oh, yes, I had a letter from her. H'm, this

complicates matters!"

"But it needn't, you see, if you and I are to be friends again."

"Friends!" he muttered disgustedly. "Oh, well, bring her, of course!"

The dinner turned into a discussion of Mellicent's shortcomings, since Disbrow could make love to neither girl under the eyes of the other, and Hilda could not very ardently make love to him, though she watched him possessively. He accused Mellicent, Hilda accused her, she accused herself.

"The trouble with me is—just as you all say—that the core of my personality is conservative to a degree which appals me now that I recognize it. It's possible that I'm not singular in this, that all women more or less have the same induced, instinctive timidity, the result of all the centuries through which you've bullied us and kept us under."

"But have we?" Disbrow demurred.
"Isn't that all rather piffle—and don't the probabilities indicate that you've merely had to put up at times with a certain sporadic brutality, just as men have had to put up with so much feminine hysteria and unreasonableness?"

Hilda was ready to give him battle on this, but Mellicent was interested in her self-analysis, and swept on.

"There's much more to it than that. Now I—I've been watching myself lately, and I assure you the things I notice have horrified me. Do you know a woman anywhere more modern than myself in all that I write, all that I say, all that I stand for? Yet the minute any difficulty arises I look around

for some man to help me out. Hilda rebuked me yesterday, quite justly, because when my maid got into a quarrel with the janitor, I telephoned up to Joe Blair on the top floor, to come down and separate them. I believe I've been calling on men to meet my troubles for me all my life, but by the—by the by the solemnest thing there is, I'm not going to do it any more."

"Hear, hear!" said Hilda.

"I remember," Disbrow said—he could grin about it now—"that you were going to have your brother thrash somebody—on a certain occasion you can't have forgotten!"

Mellicent reddened.

"Don't remind me!" she begged.
"I'm going really, from now on, to act
up to my principles. There must be
more harmony between my personal life
and my beliefs. I thought of setting
myself a series of crucial things to do.
Why, I don't even smoke!"

"I know!" cried Hilda. "Isn't it out-

rageous of her?"

"I've tried, of course—and it doesn't make me sick. I just don't care about it, and I don't like that stale tobacco smell it leaves on your breath. But give me a cigarette now, somebody, and I'll do my duty by it."

"It's a beginning, anyhow," said Dis-

brow, holding her match.

"But I mean to do difficult things. Everybody who knows me knows where I stand on a number of subjects. Why, I've even written plays upon plays about them! But I've never done a thing—never stood up personally in a hall or on a street corner and spoken for them—never so much as sat on the platform at a meeting! What should you think of making speeches on the street—as a beginning?"

"Pretty steep—for you," Disbrow commented with rising eyebrows.

"All right, I suppose!" Hilda was quite unimpressed.

"It is, isn't it," she pressed them earnestly, "the sort of thing you can't imagine a—a lady doing? And I know so many nice women who think nothing of it! I am going to force myself to go through with it next week."

"Don't do it!" the man advised. "I hate to think of your attempting it. After all, the game is to be yourself, isn't it? If you don't feel like doing blatant, unpleasant things—why, it's not up to you to do them!"

"But if they're things that shriek to be done? If I believe in them fervently? Of course I must, and—I will!"

"Dear me, Mellicent," said Hilda, taking another cigarette, "I don't see what there is to get so excited about!"

Visions of cousin Caroline rose before Mellicent's eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mellicent spent a nearly sleepless night in anticipation of her ordeal as a street campaigner, and, rousing at last with a sick relief to a downpour of rain that made it out of the question, turned over and drowsed happily till noon.

But the next day was fine, and desperately she gathered up her bundle of literature and went forth. She went unwillingly, yet under no compulsion except that of her own will, and the thought kept returning upon her, insiduously weakening, that it remained open to her even yet to give the enterprise up, pay a few easy dollars for the bundle, and despise herself eternally.

Reaching her appointed station, she felt hot and cold by turns as she made her distributions and between them watched the expressions of the people who passed, curious, sneering, interested, or shocked. To her surprise and encouragement, she was visited from time to time by a gust of pride and sat-

isfaction at being here, at proclaiming her beliefs thus in her own person.

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She was getting on! The true, the advanced Mellicent, given self-expression, was already getting the better of that atavistic thing of cowardly instincts, the Victorian who lived in her subconsciousness.

Then the sight of a vaguely familiar face brought all her embarrassment back on her.

"Why, it's Mrs. Randall, isn't it!"
"Oh-oh, how do you do?"

"Please excuse me, I know I ought to have said Miss Weir. He told me you didn't want it to be talked about. What is it you're handing out? Oh, that thing! Oh, I remember, you wrote a play about it. Well, Miss Weir, won't you let me buy the rest of what you've got there, and you come right now and have lunch with me?"

"It's not the point just to get rid of them, you see. We want to put them into the hands of as many women as possible—all kinds of women!"

"I get you!"

Nita Baxter caught half the remaining pamphlets out of Mellicent's hands, and went hawking them through the crowd. She had the uncommunicable salesman's gift, and she returned with her fourteen copies gone, while Mellicent was working off two.

"Now I'll take the rest!" she announced. "I want you to come to lunch with me."

Ten minutes later, with an ineffable lightness of heart, Mellicent walked demurely along Thirty-fourth Street beside Mrs. Baxter, soliciting no custom, drawing no glances that were not wholly respectful, her terrible self-imposed duty discharged and her attitude toward her odd, but helpful acquaintance warm to the point of affability.

Nita, delighted, ordered a sumptuous meal and beamed proudly over it upon Miss Weir while she gushed admiration, "I do call it perfectly noble of you to give your time like that to distributing those papers!" she began. "Had you been there long?"

"Oh-time! If it was, only time-"

"I declare, I must go down and see what I can do for them. When there's anything I can ever do for any advanced cause you're interested in, Miss Weir, I certainly hope you'll let me know. I don't care what I do, I'm not squeamish like some, and I should be proud to help."

"I'll remember that, Mrs. Baxter. Advanced causes, generally speaking, need three things—money, publicity, and adherents ready to go to jail for

them!"

"Jail—mercy! Well, I'll help out with the money, and your beautiful plays and lovely personality can get all the publicity you want any day, I guess—and we'll elect somebody else to get themselves locked up!"

"Yes, that's so like us, isn't it?" Mellicent agreed. "Oh, if anybody knew how I sometimes scorn myself!"

"Scorn yourself!" Mrs. Baxter repeated in real amazement. "You! Why. if I was you, I'd be so proud of myself there'd be no living with me. Why, Miss Weir, you're one of those people that have got everything! You're young, and-you know, I didn't think you were so pretty at first, but you are, you're powerfully pretty, if you won't mind my saying so-and you're real intellectual and know how to dress, and that's two things," she observed with some shrewdness, "that don't always go together. And you've got one of the nicest, brightest fellows for a husband that I know anywhere!"

"A husband!"

Mellicent uttered the world in a startled tone, for she had been forgetting the misapprehension under which Mrs. Baxter labored.

"Now, Miss Weir, I want to be your friend. As I was saying, there isn't

any one I admire more than I do you. but, of course, we don't know each other very well yet, and though lots of people do give me their confidence-I don't know how it is, but all sorts of people come and tell me their troubles-I won't ask any questions at this stage. I can see that things aren't as they should be between you and him, though—that much I can see. And, anyway, he told me as much when I kept after him to come to dinner, the two of you. He not only said you wouldn't come as Mr. and Mrs. Randall, because it was a secret -and believe me, I haven't breathed a word of it to anybody!-but he said he didn't think you'd come at all, if he was there."

Mellicent looked plaintively at her hostess. She longed to tell the truth, to end the imbroglio, but no woman who had made a study of character could observe Nita's loose mouth and rolling eye, and select her for the repository of a confidence. Those persons she spoke of who brought their troubles to her were either fools, Miss Weir thought, or, more likely, paving the way to a request for money.

If her word might be taken, Mrs. Baxter had said nothing so far of the marriage she believed to exist. Knowing the truth, could she forbear to spread a scandal? Mellicent preferred to risk nothing.

"I'd rather not talk about it, if you don't mind," she said.

"Of course not—not yet. But I'm sure, if you won't mind my just saying this—that there were faults on both sides. I'm not so awfully certain myself that this new way of being married is any real improvement on the old way, and maybe if you and he were to live together and have some dear little babies—"

"Mrs. Baxter, please!"

"All right, dearie, we'll talk about your beautiful plays!"

CHAPTER IX.

Mellicent rested complacently for weeks on the proud circumstance of having distributed "advanced" literature in the public streets. Arthur Disbrow was calling nearly every day and making determined opposition to Hilda's attempts to monopolize him. Nita Baxter was sitting at her feet for that sort of iconoclastic instruction which always came very easily to Miss Weir. Revolutionary talk in a drawing-room, with three or four sympathetic auditors at most, is quite another thing from revolutionary action. Mellicent, having campaigned for a cause on the streets, considered herself entitled to talk now for some time on the strength of it.

There was a little suggestion of grouchiness about Hilda in these days, Disbrow, though he had every opportunity, hadn't said anything more about her running away with him, and it was impossible to have eyes in one's head and not blame Mellicent. The girl was almost disposed to suspect Mellicent of a vulgar plot to reënsnare Disbrow in order to save herself from him, and one day when the morning mail had brought a note from him for Miss Weir and nothing for Miss van Zant, and he had called up in the afternoon and asked for Mellicent, ringing off on learning from Emily that she was out, Hilda developed a petulant headache and over Mellicent's protest went to bed, though Disbrow was expected in the evening.

"But he's coming to see you! I don't want to talk to him, I'm tired."

"Well, it's pretty evident he wants to talk to you. You can have a headache, too, if you feel like it."

Mellicent did not deny herself, however; she was sorry later that she had not. She lay on her day bed in delicious relaxation after the fatigue of a long motor ride with Nita into the country, and told him the events of the trip.

"Nita left her bag at the inn where

we had lunch. We found it all right afterward, but she was terribly worried. was sure she remembered having it later than that-you know the way you do remember things that aren't so, with a sort of passionate intensity you never feel about mere facts. It seems it had all sorts of valuables in it, notably a favorite bracelet she'd been carrying about, meaning to take to a jeweler's to be mended, and always forgetting. Anyhow, she was much upset and driving wildly, and we got into the hopeless hole. A nice-looking young fellow who was working in a field came and helped us, and that worried poor old Nita more than ever, because she's used to overpaying everybody in cash as she goes along, and we hadn't a penny between us to offer him, you see. I've given up taking my purse along when I'm with Nita-she takes it as a personal insult if you try to pay for anything."

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"What did you do then, when the man had got you out and you had nothing to offer him? Weren't you worried, too?"

"I? Mercy, no. He was quite young and human. I smiled at him."

"You smiled at him!" Disbrow's inflection was peculiar. "He worked for you—half an hour—an hour—and you smiled and considered the account was settled?"

"It was perfectly all right, of course. I knew it would be. I told Nita so, but she was quite unconvinced till she saw me bring it off. Poor old Nita!"

"Mellicent, you're incorrigible! Don't you realize how terribly indicative that little incident is? Don't you see that your whole betrayal of your principles is right there—in embryo? You're shameless! And I'm ashamed of you.

"You let a workingman, who needs money, do a job for you that was well worth a dollar, and you put him off with what? A bit of sex glamour, a

cheap, easy dodging of the obligation!
-Woman's old coin!"

"Isn't my smile worth a dollar, then?"
She smiled again, with a rueful little frown twisting her eyebrows.

"It's not a thing that you can set a price on—with any decency. Good heavens, Mellicent! You know your smiles, figuratively speaking, are all I want on earth. Perhaps I'm jealous because that farm hand got one. Mellicent! You make it too impossibly hard, when you expect me to go on being modern and comradely and all that, and at the same time you're so damned feminine!"

He came over to the day bed, sat on the foot of it, and devoured her, languid, appealing, with his eyes.

"You're illogical all along the line," he declared angrily in a voice which thickened as he proceeded. "To hear you talk, you're an anarchist in love, and the only kiss I ever had from you I had to pay for in the unbearable in sults you hurled at me afterward. D'you know what I'm beginning to think about you? Shall I tell you?"

Mellicent pulled hersel! up a little on her cushions, shaken and apprehensive. From her equipment for life was missing the instinct for handling such a situation as this; she could only provoke it. She knew how to go into a rage and repeat those sentiments of outraged virtue which in a melodrama are sure of a responsive hand, but she was determined not to fall into those depths again. Her reason told her that a sincere offer of love should not be an insult, but she knew at the same time that she had an unpleasant scene before her, unless she could find effective means to avert it.

"No, don't tell me," she said ineptly, and he moved some inches nearer and told her.

"You're feminine—primitive feminine—to the core. Your plays and your clever talk are just veneer, skin deep. What you need, what you'd answer to, is a man who'll master you—beat you, perhaps. It's against all my principles, but——"

"I shall scream!" she said breathlessly, as his mouth came away at last from hers, and the hurting pressure of her neck against the head of the day bed ceased. He had kissed her with all a cave man's roughness and lack of thought for her comfort. As he held her hands and leaned over her, she had six inches' freedom of movement for her head, and that was all.

"No, you won't scream—you're too well brought up. You don't want a scandal! I'm giving you what you want."

But he read her quite wrongly. Whether from a man she loved such treatment would or would not have gratified the primordial feminine in Mellicent, she did not know. She had, however, the strongest, most fastidious dislike for it from Disbrow, and she did indeed scream, faintly in order not to be heard outside of her own apartment, determinedly to reach Hilda in her bedroom.

"Hilda! Come-quick!"

Before Disbrow had time to get up, to change his telltale attitude, or to compose his face, the girl had appeared in the doorway, pale, but fetching in a pink kimono, with her dark hair in braids over her shoulders. Perhaps his passion had sent ripples to reach and disturb her in her bedroom, and she had been uneasily straining for sounds from the outside. Certainly she appeared with disconcerting promptitude.

Disbrow got up and got out.

There was nothing else for him to do. Just as there is nothing more flattering to masculine vanity than to play the cave man with success, so there is nothing much more upsetting than to essay the part, and fail to bring it off, and

that Hilda should have witnessed his rebuff helped nothing.

To Mellicent was left the job of soothing Hilda, a difficult thing had she been herself fresh and unruffled, impossible to accomplish successfully while she was still feeling unnerved and exhausted. There were reproaches and furious accusations and tears, and an announcement, not combated, that Hilda would return next morning to her mother's roof.

At last there was silence, and Mellicent lay back on her cushions, too tired to make the effort of going to bed, though it was incredibly early, not yet, indeed, ten o'clock.

When the telephone rang she reached over and took the instrument from its stand, letting it rest across her breast and not lifting her aching head from the pillow as she talked into it.

"This is Mellicent Weir," she said faintly.

"I can hardly believe my luck—I've tried so many times to get you! The telephone service in this town—Well, we needn't talk about the telephone service."

"But who-"

"Oh, this is Keith Randall."

"Oh!" said Mellicent helplessly.

His voice, eager, deferential, quick with interest, brought his disembodied personality to her in the detached manner possible only to the telephone. She found it oddly comforting in this moment of abasement and loneliness; she listened as he went on.

"I was afraid it was rather late to call you, but I thought central might find it more possible to concentrate her mind after business hours. You know I really have tried to get you nearly a dozen times, Miss Weir. They keep giving me the wrong number. I'd given up in despair, when to-night—do you mind my telling you?—I began to think about you, as if you might be

in trouble, or something. You're not, are you?"

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"Oh, I was—I've had a horrible evening!" she told him in a burst of confidence born of weakness.

"Is there anything I can do?" he asked, not perfunctorily. The quiet question made her know that she might demand any service, and it would be discharged.

"Oh, no. It's all over now. Just a man I thought was a friend, showed he—wasn't. Nothing really. Just disillusioning and—unpleasant. Men are rather horrible, I find. Not you—you aren't like that, are you?"

"I try not to be—with some success. When may I come to see you, Miss Weir?"

Everything that Mellicent had forgotten, in the moment of confidential, solacing intercourse, came back to her now with a rush, and she was silent. She couldn't think, on the spur of the instant's necessity like this, of any explanation which would cover the right telephone number and the wrong address, though she would have been quite willing now to let Keith Randall come to see her. She liked him, liked his pleasant voice as it came to her over the wires.

But there wasn't anything to do about it, or so it seemed to her tired and puzzled brain. She had forfeited his friendship when she had told him her address wrongly, and it was too late to straighten things out now. Mellicent hung up her receiver, to all intents and purposes cutting herself off as definitely and eternally from Keith Randall as if she had cut a rope that dangled him over a Swiss precipice.

He lapsed for her into the abyss of the countless unknown, and, taking the receiver off the hook again and leaving it so, she fled from any reproachful buzzing which might ensue to the refuge of her own room and bed.

CHAPTER X.

Keith Randall had established himself in Grove Street with little formality, finding bareness and dinginess a stimulating contrast to the luxurious surroundings he had been obliged till now to live in and support. Pasht smelled and explored to contentment. with the rooms, which contained mice, a stimulating novelty in her life.

But even through the fascinating preoccupations of installation the little question kept putting itself to Keith, "Is it too soon to call her up?" And when four days had passed he decided that to telephone Miss Weir to-day would not be to display a betraying eagerness.

He thought, of course, that the vagaries of the telephone service were to blame for his bad luck with the number which he had copied so carefully as it came from lips which could scarcely be mistaken about it. Emily having her instructions, invariably informed Mr. Randall that he had the wrong number, and once, when he would have sworn that it was Mellicent's voice answering him, he received the same information a second later, in a hurried, slurred murmur.

The intimate, wonderful little conversation in which her tired voice came with such plaintive sweetness to his ears, revived his hopes, and he tried half a dozen times next day to have speech with her again. Then, abandoning the telephone, he went uptown to the bizarre address given him, and found, of course, no Miss Weir, found, indeed, a bicycle-repair shop and nothing else. There was no excuse for mystification any longer; it was only too plain that Miss Weir did not wish to continue his acquaintance.

Keith was deeply and, he told himself, disproportionately hurt. She was only one girl, superficially encountered, among millions, and she had behaved unworthily with regard to him, was doubtless small-souled, conventional, petty through and through. He could have accepted this reading of her and made up his mind to forget their meeting, to forget even the five minutes when they had talked on the telephone, but for the information that had come to him through Nita Baxter that she was not chance Miss Weir, but Mellicent Weir herself, the writer of the plays that had so impressed him.

His books arrived presently, and from the bottom of one of the boxes he routed out the slim volume in blue-gray boards, and reread the four little plays of revolt. There was thought in them, and a real smolder of conviction, and in each the heroine was unconventional to a degree which startled even in this day, and quite disconcertingly outspoken and truthful, about all the mat-

ters usually dissembled.

Keith laid down the book with a sense of bewilderment, after having refreshed his memory in regard to it. Must there not be a mistake here, he asked himself, and had not Mrs. Baxter's confident identification of the girl on the train as the interesting young playwright, been a mere blunder? It was to assure himself that she had grounds for her certainty that he kept his promise to call on Nita, but in the character of Mellicent's husband he had to question warily.

"You had known Miss Weir before, of course?" he suggested, remembering that she had spoken of Mrs. Baxter only as "an awful woman in the dressing room," without reference to any

previous acquaintance.

"Why, I couldn't go so far as to say that. I met her, at a luncheon of the Drama League, and while, of course, she was at the speaker's table and I wasn't, still I was pretty near, and I was watching her all the time. You know, I just can't understand how anybody can write a play or a book or anything-I couldn't write a play to save my life! And to see this little slim thing sitting up there, and to think she'd written the play the league considered was the strongest one-act piece of the year—I declare, I couldn't take my eyes off her, she seemed kind of miraculous to me! That's why I was so sure I wasn't making any mistake when I saw her on the train."

It sounded conclusive, and Keith was forced to believe that it was, indeed, the creator of Tatiana and Ann Turner and Hedwig and Mary Anstructer, who had betrayed in personal use a set of standards so different from those of her heroines. Nothing, of course, could have been easier for Randall than to find Mellicent, now that he knew her fame; and to discover a mutual acquaintance to introduce him with every circumstance of propriety would be a mere matter of questioning half a dozen likely people at most, the probabilities being that the first who occurred to him would prove to know Mellicent Weir.

But he was not ready to force himself on her after her definite intimation that she didn't wish to continue the acquaintance. He felt, indeed, a considerable resentment against her for treament that the old word "scurvy" seemed to him best to qualify; he himself had behaved, he considered, reviewing the incident from beginning to end, quite unexceptionably, and if she regarded his offer to share his stateroom as in itself an insult, why, all she need to have done was to refuse it. ing accepted it, she owed him surely a measure of civility, and the truth about where she lived.

He was not, really, an undesirable acquaintance, he told himself, aggrieved, abandoning the modesty which would have forbidden him to say so to any one else. He was a gentleman, all right, if you were going to begin talking about gentlemen—a thing he himself always avoided—a Harvard man, of the best personal life and habits and an earning

capacity to be dropped however sternly in abeyance, of about thirty thousand dollars a year. He hadn't, he knew, the beauty of a moving-picture actor; his eyelashes were neither particularly long nor particularly curly, and a willingness to curl on the part of his hair had been subdued out of existence at least ten years ago. But his skin and eyes were clear and his teeth sound, white, and well-aligned.

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He was angry with Mellicent Weir, and his vanity was closely involved in his anger. Had they been bound for different destinations, on that journey which had brought them together, had there been no question of an address and a call, he might by now have forgotten his traveling companion, however appearance and voice had charmed him at the time of encounter. But as it was, he thought about her constantly, devoted hours together to resenting her behavior and telling her mentally what he thought of it and of her.

The fatal thing is, of course, to give a man this kind of importance in your own mind, if you are a woman, to give it to a woman if you are a man. That you may fancy yourself angry and resentful primarily is no protection, rather the reverse. Keith would have snarled a furious denial if anybody had interrupted one of his bitter reveries to tell him that he was falling in love with Mellicent Weir.

It was none the less true.

CHAPTER XI.

When Mrs, van Zant had telephoned her with tearful gratitude that Hilda was returned to the parent roof, unable to say enough against Arthur Disbrow, Mellicent breathed a sigh of relief and returned to the consideration of her own affairs.

She had been laying, she decided, too much stress upon sex. Sex is only one factor of the woman's problem, and equally important is at least one other: economics. Her next attempt to live up to her principles should be made in the field of economics.

For Mellicent, though her work was sincere enough to give her a purpose in life, and though she had a small public by now which took her with the most flattering seriousness, had made so little money from her writings that she had hardly taken the trouble to reckon it up, or looked on her earnings as a serious asset to her exchequer.

She called herself a playwright, but she had never known the heartbreaking experience of nearly all playwrights. In the beginning she had written what interested and pleased herself, and when her plays had not been given amateur production, their semiprofessional productions had been backed by Austin Weir, and what few changes had been made were respectfully suggested, and carried out only with Mellicent's consent.

The writing of plays, therefore, presented itself to her as a pleasant literary exercise, and though she knew that one had to write a different kind of thing for the Broadway houses, which paid actual royalties, it did not occur to her that there would be any difference in the procedure of placing and producing them. And she had heard, of course, like everybody else, astounding tales of the amount of money earned for their authors by some of these inferior, successful plays.

How often she had glibly repeated that no woman was free who could not earn her own living! Probably every one who had heard her—Nita certainly, and all the men and women whose knowledge of material affairs was theoretic—had inferred that she maintained her apartment and dressed as enviably as she did, by her own work. All the time she was herself the very parasite she had denounced. She had written a play once to show

up that woman, that despicable creature who lives in ease because the man she flatters has bludgeoned his world into yielding him tribute, who, having neither strength nor excessive virtue of her own, patronizes the woman who has both and, without privilege, does her work and pays her way and, in Mellicent's play at least, triumphs in the end over her weaker sister.

She, Mellicent, had been herself a weak sister.

Merely because her father had given always openhandedly, never indulging in the tyranny or the caddish taunts that the man who pays permits himself in melodrama, she was none the less contemptible in accepting. A woman as much as a man—oh, more, far more than a man, because for him the principle in America at least stands established!—should earn her own way.

The conclusion was inescapable, and her failure to perceive it till now was only another instance of her failure all along the line to live her principles. Here, though, was a betraval which need not be continued for an instant; in these material matters there was no shrinking core of personality to be bullied into unnatural and desperate dar-One worked at something beneath one's talents, one reduced, if that proved to be necessary, one's scale of living. Only the most superficial sacrifices would be demanded of her, and Mellicent determined that in this fundamental matter of living on her own earnings, whatever else she failed at, she would be true to herself.

She spent the remnant of the morning, after getting up at eleven, breakfasting languidly and telephoning to Mrs. van Zant, in writing a declaration of independence to her father. He would be puzzled and hurt, she knew, and to soothe him she ended with the assurance that in any emergency she would call on him for help. But even while she was writing this she was re-

solving that no such emergency should arise.

After this she began to recall to her mind all the successful plays that she had recently seen, and to analyze the scenes and situations that had pleased the audiences. It seemed that she ought to be able to devise the same sort of thing, and it was not long before she had the germ of a plot, but it seemed to her quite illogical and unjust that she should suffer from a feeling of self-scorn as she developed it, since it was exactly in order that she might respect herself that she was doing this instead of more congenial work.

Keith Randall, not so very far away, as the crow flies, was meantime giving himself with unmixed satisfaction to the contrary process, and finding even its tremendous difficulties stimulating. He had dealt quite remorselessly, in his unregenerate days, in the cliché and the machine-made situation, and while he could reject beforehand any trite themes that occurred to him, he found that stereotyped groupings of words offered themselves insidiously to him, had constantly to be guarded against, detected, and cast out. He reveled in the work, writing with no thought of publishers or public, writing short stories, because there is more artistry in the shaping of a short story, writing to please and satisfy himself alone and wondering, when he had finished something that seemed to him good, whether Mellicent Weir would ever read it.

Most of his work she could not read, because it remained unpublished. Randall could have sold it all, if he had put his name to it, but in that case the people who would have read in the expectation of finding the sort of thing he had given them before, would have been disappointed, and the people who would not have been disappointed would not have read. He had no choice but to use a pen name, and Mellicent, reading his work once or twice in the recondite

periodicals she affected, approved without, of course, imagining that she knew the writer.

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Her own undertaking had progressed by now to what she naïvely imagined to be its ending, the correction of the revised typescript. Fancying herself at the goal, she stood at the starting point of a race which was more like the caucus race in "Alice in Wonderland" than any contest of reasonable rules and a chance for the competitor to show his quality. She began to have interviews with people who praised her play and desired to produce it, who talked of it as already produced, and then, step by step, receded from that position to one of such dubiety on the whole subject that it became evident they had induced her to make the most radical changes for no purpose at all.

"You gotta stage one act, anyway, in a bedroom," they told her, "and you gotta put more pep into the last act, and ye gotta think up a better tag than that. The whole success of a play, you might say, depends on the tag!"

She listened, bewildered, but submissive, because she acknowledged that these vulgar men knew more about the thing she had stooped to do than she knew herself. Happily for Mellicent, her type did not appeal to most of them, while her clothes were unmistakably impressive, and she had no advances of a personal kind to repel. She had only the same slow discouragement that a man in the same position would have met.

She was used to success and appreciation, and lacked the patience that would have gained her ends for her, perhaps, in time She came home with her manuscript after the fifteenth distillusion, and burned the play, by now intolerable to her in every scene and turn and character of it.

The act gave her a savage satisfaction, but Emily's voice from the doorway dashed her. "Miss Mellicent, I haven't got any more money for the housekeeping, and there's a store, where we don't deal, with real nice berries—"

One of the comforts of Emily was hat she was both competent and trustworthy, and Mellicent had never to busy herself with any details of her ménage, beyond paying by check the few bills which were presented monthly. Emily marketed, contracted for the laundry work, settled with the milkman by the week and the butcher with each day's purchase. It entailed giving her fifty dollars or so in cash at regular intervals, and Mellicent had never till now found the smallest difficulty in doing so.

She opened her check book, and found the figures on the left side arresting and discouraging. It was only a few days to the first of the month, when her rent, no smaller than other people's rent, would have to be paid, and though she had tried to be economical lately she knew that there would be various bills, all larger than she had expected. Fifty dollars for Emily! She frowned at the blank check before her, a feeling of helplessness paralyzing her as she remembered that the play that was to have made her rich was burned. It wouldn't, in any case, have made her rich.

She had only to write a line to her father to have her bank balance comfortably reënforced by return mail. But it would be too ignominious to give in so soon. She scrawled Emily's check doggedly and gave it to her with the ink unblotted.

"Make it go as far as you can, won't you?" she said anxiously, and it was the first counsel of the kind that Emily had ever received. "Perhaps I ought to have told you before—I'm trying an experiment to see whether I can live on what I earn myself."

"Oh!" said Emily blankly. "Then maybe I'd better not get the berries. They're eighty cents a box."

"We don't have to be that economical?" disclaimed Mellicent, who liked strawberries and had not reached the point of perceiving that eighty cents could become important. "Get them, by all means. Only—not chicken or sweetbreads, perhaps, so often, for a little while!"

Left alone, she drew diagrams absent-mindedly on her blotter and pondered her situation. It looked like an impasse, yet she was not ready to turn back to the road which lay clear. And with full realization of the probabilities, it was still a relief to have done with the wretched play which was now black in the fireplace.

CHAPTER XII.

"You really believe in a cause only when you are ready to go to jail for it," they told Mellicent.

She assented with troubled eyes. "You are with us, aren't you?"

"Oh, surely!"

"You see, it's very easy for them to lock up a lot of little obscure East Siders; their trials pass almost unnoticed, the newspapers won't give any space to them, because they have no news value. Now, Miss Weir, if we could get you to put yourself in reach of the law, to force them to arrest and try you—"

"Me-oh!"

The suggestion took Mellicent's breath away, and the suave gentleman who was making it had opportunity to say much more before she could formulate an answer.

"Consider the value to yourself, too, Miss Weir—the advertisement! Why, it would be a front-page story in every newspaper in the country! Of course, no one pretends it's pleasant to go to jail—"

The black-browed girl who had accompanied him pursed her lips ironically. She had suffered arrest and imprisonment herself, and Doctor Adams -she scorned him for it secretly-had always so far evaded it.

"It is not pleasant. But it would be in this case a matter of a light sentence—say vixty days at the outside—and you women are so magnificent nowadays! So many delicate, cultivated women have shown themselves so splendidly willing to lie in squalid prisons for their convictions, that there's no limit to what we've come to expect of you! I feel sure that you are going to amaze me, too, Miss Weir, by the strength of your spirit in taking up this challenge!"

Mellicent's own imagination outran his too-practiced flowers of speech. She saw it all, the triumph of it, the right to wear forever the proud medal of one who has been imprisoned for her principles. It would win her real respect from all sorts of people who had not as yet yielded her quite that tribute. it would set her for all time at peace with herself. Undoubtedly-she despised herself for thinking of this-it would stimulate the sale of her published plays. It might be perhaps the solution of her difficulties that she had looked for and failed to find.

But, unhappily her powers of realization were equally vivid on the other A big, brawny, blue policeman would place his hand on her shoulder and take her through streets full of curious watchers to some place of detention before trial. Mellicent balked just here, at this very first step of all. not finding it necessary even to consider the unpleasantness of prison, of which she had read and heard much, or the ordeal of the trial itself. couldn't have a policeman's hand upon her, otherwise than to give her assistance, perhaps, across a street. thing was unthinkable. Her face burned at the mere idea.

In all likelihood the man, had she invited arrest, would not have touched her, but she fancied that arrest, like

confirmation, would be invalid without the laving on of hands.

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"I couldn't do it!" she said, bitterly ashamed of herself, but desperately firm in her refusal. "I'm not so brave as that. I admire the people who are—more than I can say. But I couldn't face it, myself. I couldn't, couldn't!"

"Well—will you give us a check to help fight the cases of those who can?" Doctor Adams asked. And for very shame Mellicent had to write a big one.

She was left with barely money in the bank to pay her rent, and Doctor Adams and Nora Steel were hardly out of the apartment before Emily brought in the afternoon mail, consisting of a letter or two of slight importance and a communication from Miss Weir's landlord, desiring to know whether she wished to renew her lease, at a scrupulously legal advance of twenty-five per cent.

Snatching at the chance to commit herself to something, Mellicent answered him very definitely that she did not wish to renew, and sent Emily to the mail box with her letter in order not to give herself time to weaken.

Bitterness was boiling up in her, and rage against the institution which could threaten a woman, acting from the highest motives, with the penalties which she had been afraid to face and which the girl who had just left her had faced; scorn for the courts which would exalt their clumsy laws above the infallible consciences of such women, but scorn most of all for herself. feelings had to have an outlet, and suddenly, with a return of calm to Mellicent, they found the channel of her art. A tense scene half shaped itself and then melted and sank before her. She saw her protagonist, a girl like all her heroines, braver than herself, saw the drama of her adventure and the faint outlines of its structure. She sank on to the day bed, lighting a cigaretteher one real achievement in the field of modernizing her life had been to learn to smoke and while she smoked nearly a hoxful and her nerves quieted under the tobacco's influence, she brooded, caught into the rare, perfect mood of creation, happy for the time being and

She was far too interested in the new play to worry about money; she remembered to pay her rent a few days late, and let all the other bills slide. and in a fortnight of concentrated work she had finished the most startling play she had ever written, clever, amazingly dramatic, breathless in its interest from beginning to end.

She telephoned to the play reader for the particular small organization of serious players in which she was most directly interested. They had already out on two of her playlets, with rather more than the succesè d'estime that she was always sure of, and Ralph Hazard came with alacrity to drink Mellicent's tea and listen to the new piece.

"Gee!" he said, when she had ended and he had drawn a long breath after a moment's tribute of silence. is absolutely the most ripping thing you've done yet, Miss Weir. could only have stuff like this to put on all the time! You're going to let us do it, of course? We'll put it into rehearsal right away, and end the new bill with it. I wasn't satisfied with that thing of Carger's. Reads well, but it's pretty weak dramatically."

"You do think," said Mellicent wistfully, "that a play like this, presented as you'll present it, accomplishes something for the cause it deals with?"

"Why, of course it does! Why, think of the thousands of people who'll see it," he spluttered his conviction. "Why, I'm in this thing for art's sake, but, of course, that's one end of our serious drama and one of the most important-to expose hypocrisies, to start people thinking."

Neither of them had any idea how

many people Mellicent's play was destined to start thinking. When Hazard spoke of thousands being influenced he knew that the number was rather euphemistic, for certainly of those who would see the play, far the larger proportion would come in on paper passes, with their minds already as wide open on the particular subject as Mellicent could wish to pry them.

In the weeks when the play was in rehearsal she suffered reaction, of course, was discouraged and dubious again about her power of earning her living, for the advance that the Serious Players could pay her was extremely small, and did little more than provide Emily with household cash. Mellicent. going occasionally to the rehearsals, never failed of a little stir at hearing her own brave words, and the moments in which she listened to them were the brightest of that time.

Disbrow was making a nuisance of himself, and Nita Baxter's ostentatious wealth was an offense to one who had embraced poverty and was trying to Actual embarrasssee its beauties. ments were beginning about money, and the only acceptable relief from them lay in the tiny royalties she might expect from a play which was only a quarter of an evening's never-too-profitable en-

tertainment.

First nights, especially when an audience of enthusiastic friends packs the house, are always hysterical triumphs, and, elated in spite of herself by her play's reception. Mellicent knew at heart that all this adulation meant practically The newspapers next day nothing. meant more, and she read them with real surprise.

She was not used to praise from most of these organs, and though several of them disapproved of her thesis and one or two damned her play because of it, the others wrote with genuine surprised admiration, calling "Flood Tide" the most original and dramatic of the year's productions, brilliant, admirably constructed, and well worth seeing.

Whether because of this recommendation or the more potent word-of-mouth advertisement, it seemed to the astounded members of the Serious Players' League that every one in New York really was trying to see their plays. The weeks saw no falling off, but an increase in the demands for seats in exchange for real money, the agencies came for blocks of tickets, and if it had been possible to secure an uptown playhouse, it would have been justifiable from the business point of view to transfer to it.

The little theater had so few seats that it was not possible to take in a great deal of money, even when they were all filled, and there was no prospect that the production would make anybody rich, least of all the author even of that item in the program which usurped all the outside interest. Mellicent was still subject to moods of depression about money, was in fact actually wondering how it was going to be possible to live on earnings which were pitifully meager; and she was contemplating surrender when the offer from the moving-picture company was made,

It took her breath; the sum named seemed fabulous in connection with her work. She had never counted a full thousand dollars' takings for any year of her life, and here was as much as she had been accustomed to spend in a year—a very different matter—offered her for a by-product of two weeks' work! More, the moving picture, the entertainment of the multitude, would spread the message of her play to half America.

She felt all her troubles dropping away from her, lay back against her cushions ecstatic, satisfied, proud. She had shirked going to jail. But no one, no one, could say now that she had not done more for the cause by staying out and writing "Flood Tide" than she could conceivably have done by going.

She had earned her own living, with any sort of prudence, for two years to come. She had made a good beginning, surely, of squaring her life with her ideals.

CHAPTER XIII.

Freed of the need to worry, either over her exchequer or her soul, Mellicent loafed in the spring weather, went out more than was her wont, to be met by all sorts of people who were eager to meet her, and indulged with the circle of her intimates in that talk about her art and theirs which is to the talker so endlessly interesting.

Eve Meadows, who had made the hit of her brief career as Kate in "Flood Tide," dilated on the inspiration that the part was to her, on the subtle influence which acted characters have upon their portrayers,

"I felt positively debased all the time that I was playing that wretched Polly in the last bill," she said. "How I hated that girl! You know, I can only "How I act by throwing myself into a part, pretending all the time that I am the per-Sometimes I actually forget I'm They tell me that's not the right way to go about it, that it's like natural singing, as good as trained some of the time, but not to be relied on. I believe in getting away from the academic in all the arts, myself. Only it has the disadvantage, my way, that when you play an odious person it makes you feel odious. Conversely, of course, when you play a perfectly corking part like Kate, it makes you feel absolutely cocky, you get to think so well of yourself!"

"I imagine you'll find it like all experience," Mellicent suggested. "A part or two may seem to influence you, but they nullify each other as you add new ones. That's why one exalts youth, because only a person who could live a million years could hope for a child's freedom from prejudice."

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she's magnificent! Honestly, do you know what I did last night? Coming straight home from the theater, trying to hold on to the feeling of being Kate as long as possible, I sat down and wrote a letter that I ought to have written two years ago! Fact! Just ending a false position that I'd allowed myself to remain in all this time, simply hecause I was too cowardly to cut loose from it. I had to have outside strength to be able to do it, and Kate gave it to me. You gave it to me, Miss Weir, of course really, in the last analysis. You can't think how free and happy I feel, now it's done!"

Mellicent marveled, for any strength Kate had had been born of her own weakness, but she felt glad that she had helped Eve, and very curious to know the nature of the situation to which an end had been put. She was too well bred to ask direct questions, however, and though her manner invited confidence, Eve offered no more of it.

She was a newcomer to New York, a dark, brilliant girl of about Mellicent's age, rather mysterious in her lack of antecedents, interested apparently in nothing but the stage. The sequel to the act she had boasted might, Mellicent admitted, have been viewed humorously, but the people interested in the production of "Flood Tide" scarcely saw it so.

In immediate consequence of Eve's definite letter, a man arrived at the Grand Central Station on a train from Boston, presenting himself shortly afterward at the studio which Eve shared with a girl who painted, and after a scene whose stormy reverberations had absolutely frightened the artist, fled for refuge to the kitchen, it appeared that the finality of Eve's letter was overthrown and that, indeed, an ending of a directly contrary nature had been agreed to.

Miss Weir's curiosity was satisfied, and, rather disgusted, she asked her-

self why people should be interested in enigmas in real life, since their explanations were always so utterly commonplace? Had she been writing a play about Eve, she would have thought of something decidedly better than a too long engagement, a man's desire to establish a business firmly, and willingness to put off marriage while he imagined that it rested with him at any time to name the day. And the banal conclusion of his immediate coming to terms when the girl had broken the engagement, the flare-up of his passion which had caught her again as well-Mellicent could certainly have improved upon that!

All Eve's friends asked each other what she could possibly see in the manwho was shocked by "Flood Tide" and would barely permit her to play Kate long enough for some one else to rehearse the part. The Serious Players were in despair; they had not another actress of anything approaching Eve's looks and personality, and they were terribly afraid that, without her in the rôle of Kate, their success might end abruptly.

Everybody else thought of Mellicent before the idea that she might play her own heroine occurred to her. Another woman playwright had that winter made a success of such an innovation, and interest in the play, of course, would be stimulated, instead of weakened, if the change were from Miss Meadows to Miss Weir.

She had acted a little, in amateur productions, and all the league's productions were essentially amateur, much better accordingly, and much less good than the average professional ones. Her performance could not fail to be interesting, and the theater was so small that her soft, untrained voice would, nevertheless, be heard without difficulty in the last seat.

What decided Mellicent to attempt the part was—illogically, in view of the consequences—the recollection of what Eve had said about the effect on herself of merging into the personality of Kate. She felt almost susperstitious about it, as if her heroine had come to have a sort of life of her own, as if it would be possible, indeed, by throwing herself into the part for an hour of every day, to gain some of the courage which she had given so liberally to that abstraction.

CHAPTER XIV.

Like the rest of New York, but more inevitably, Keith Randall went to see "Flood Tide." He was surprised by it, a little taken back by it, and more than ever puzzled that so red a banner should be waved in the public face by the woman who had shown a conventionality which was absolutely crude in her dealings with himself.

Later he read that the woman who had written "Flood Tide" was to play its leading rôle and, like all the rest of New York again, he went to see it a

second time.

No one had been more surprised than Mellicent to discover, when she was made up for the part of Kate, with the black hair which certain lines she had written called for, how unkind nature had been to her in the matter of coloring. As a frame to her face, the dark hair proved to be infinitely becoming. Her lightly drawn eyebrows and the glint on the fair lashes may have been distracting to Disbrow, Keith, and a few others, but the accentuation of them with grease paint made her, not for the discerning only, but for any chance eye now, a beautiful woman. she who had never enjoyed much reputation for her beauty, had the morning after her first appearance a whole bouquet of compliments on that score, as well as any agreeably pronouncements upon her acting.

Keith had meant to drop into the

theater alone, to sit by himself, talking to nobody, and to slip out when the curtain descended on "Flood Tide." He had the bad luck to be recognized by Nita Baxter, who bore down on him in the lobby and claimed him for her prize.

"You haven't got anybody with you? You come right in and sit with me; I'm all alone, too. Hilda van Zant was going to meet me here, and I've just had word she can't come. I was going in, anyhow—I can't see Millicent act too often. Isn't she just grand in this? Did you know she could act before? It's not the first time you've seen the show, of course, is it?"

"No," he told her. "I've seen it before." He did not explain that he had not yet seen Miss Weir act, for fear that all his impressions would be demanded of him as they registered.

Nita subsided when the curtain went up—a respectful erasing of herself at such moments was one of her good points—and Keith was able to attend to the stage almost as well as if a stranger sat beside him. Mellicent's entrance, of course, was marked by brisk applause, and it was this applause which first told him who she was. For a moment he did not recognize her in her enhancing make-up and with the unfamiliar darkness of her head.

Where amateur actors fail oftenest is in the creating of illusion. Perhaps because it is so abundantly present for themselves, they cannot assemble skillfully the elements necessary to produce it in the beholder, and Mellicent, clever and interesting and convinced a performance as she gave, was not entirely convincing. She remained herself, and to Keith, at least, she was none the less fascinating for that.

"She's wonderful—simply wonderful!" Mrs. Baxter said at the close of the performance. She had been weeping shamelessly, though it had been farthest from Mellicent's intention to draw tears. "When she stands up there at

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the end and bawls everybody out, and there's no comeback left in any of 'em, it always makes me cry. It did even when Miss Meadows did it, and I think Mellicent can act all around her in circles, don't you? Well, of course you do—you're her——"

Randall caught her arm in a grip which was almost a pinch, just in time to prevent her announcing in her loud, carrying voice, in the crowded lobby of the theater, that he was Mellicent's hus-

band.

"That was a near thing," she gasped, sobered. And a minute later, "Come in my car with me, will you, Mr. Randall? I'll take you home if you're going there. There's so many things I want to say to you, and I'll make another break unless we can talk where nobody'll hear us."

He followed her into the waiting car, and she laid her hand solemnly on

his knee.

"You know, I'm old enough to be your mother," she began, and he frowned ruefully in the darkness at the threat of such an opening.

"You love her; now, don't you?"

It was worse than he had feared, and Keith sat quite silent, biting his lips

"It's an impossible thing to discuss, Mrs. Baxter," he said desperately at last. "You don't know—you don't understand——"

"Oh, my dear boy! I know I'm not clever, and probably you wouldn't believe to look at me now that I was ever pretty. But I can tell you, I had men after me when I was—even ten years younger than I am now. It's being fat does it, makes you look a million years old, when I know women older than me that— Oh, we'l!!

"What I mean to say is that I know something about men and women, and I can see well enough you're in love with your wife, and you can talk to me till you're black in the face about being modern and all that, but it isn't

natural for two people who are in love with each other to be together as little as you are! I've been seeing enough of Mellicent to know pretty well how much you haven't been seeing of her, and I can tell you, too, that she isn't happy."

It was dark in the car and the woman was, if a little vulgar, sympathetic enough. Keith, who hadn't talked confidentially to any one since he had come to New York, heard himself saying wretchedly, finding some comfort in

half confidence:

"But why are you so sure it's all my fault? Can't you imagine that I'd like to see more of her if she'd let me?"

"I can imagine that all right. If I were a man, I'd be in love with her myself. But I'm sure you're to blame, because she isn't happy. You know she's so slender and delicate looking, I could break her in two, and yet she has me completely buffaloed. I can no more go asking her questions—

"One day about three months ago I went to see her and she was in a queer mood, knocking men to beat the band. She said it was all very well trying to be free and comradely and unconventional, but there was a lot to be said on the other side, too, and there was a beast in every man that you had to look out for. I wondered at the time whether that had reference to you!"

Keith, knowing well enough that it had not, wondered now to whom it had had reference.

"She must have loved you once,"
Nita went on less comfortingly than she
fancied, rather exasperatingly, indeed,
"or else, of course, she wouldn't have
married you. She's the kind of a woman
—I do know her well enough to be sure
of that!—who'd only love in the highest and purest sense, and never but one
man, unless, of course, he was dead
or divorced, and it was a long time afterward. Then I don't say— Well,
you're not dead—and my advice to you

36

is, never say die! Go after her, Mr. Randall, put your arms around her, and tell her what nonsense it is, this being married and not being married. Stand up for your rights! Aren't you her husband?"

The question was only rhetorical, but Keith almost answered it in a sense that would have surprised Mrs. Baxter. It was intolerable to be reproached for not pushing claims which were not his to push. But it was Mellicent with whom Mrs. Baxter had made friends, she who had allowed the misapprehension to go uncorrected in the first instance, and it was she, surely, who ought to explain the true situation to Nita if any explanations were to be Her omission to disclaim him constituted an obligation on him not to repudiate her, and he could only sit in moody silence, listening to counsel which made his face burn, which troubled and enthralled him.

He had by no means as yet admitted to himself that he loved Mellicent Weir. though he was aware that he admired her, found her charming, interesting, provoking, and unforgetable, and the impression she had made on him tonight was to be largely discounted, he considered, as due in great part to footlight glamour and the startling effect of coloring not her own. The lure of that dazzling artificiality is potent in boyhood, but at thirty-three men know better how to value it. The question that he had to ask himself was whether he wanted his coffee poured out for life by the Mellicent of the Pullman drawing-room, and when he considered this pleasing domestic scene as one alternative-unaware that she invariably breakfasted in bed-he had to set against it all those fair possibilities of worthy work which marriage must, he supposed, annihilate.

Till to-night he hadn't swerved from the dedication of himself to celibacy and to letters, but now, whether Nita's forthright words clarified his thoughts, or the vision of Mellicent in the flesh had shaken him, he abandoned suddenly all pretense with himself. He was weak and unstable, perhaps. Who isn't, where love is concerned? Its weak assaults, its light sallies, can be met and turned, but when it chooses to attack in earnest, the shock of it blinds and bewilders; resistance is not to be thought of. Keith faced the truth now, no longer trying to deny it.

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When Nita, saying good night to him at his door, leaned forward and whispered in hushed accents: "There's just one question I'm going to ask you, Mr. Randall—do you love her?" he answered in the words of the marriage service, as soberly as he would have spoken them in church:

"Yes, Mrs. Baxter-I do."

CHAPTER XV.

Nita's certainties were strengthened by observing, whenever she herself came to the theater, that somewhere in the front of the house she was almost sure to see Keith. She dropped in often, with offers to take Mellicent home in her car, with invitations and flatteries and presents, and she found silent faithfulness immensely touching, wondered if Mellicent had observed it, wanted to ask her if she had, and, as usual when it came to asking personal questions of Miss Weir, did not find the courage.

Nita's expectation that confidence would come with better acquaintance had been rather cruelly disappointed. Mellicent had come to count on the other's good nature and her real devotion, without much altering her private estimate of her as a well-meaning and garrulous fool. She had suffered her in the first place, not quite meanly, for the checks that Nita would write with beaming eagerness for any movement which Mellicent recommended to

her, and in the time of her discouragement and self-contempt her admiration, as lavish as the checks, had been distinctly soothing. The result was a sort of unequal friendship between the two dissimilar women, in which the ascendancy was completely Mellicent's.

Miss Weir would have been surprised to know how romantically Nita thought of her, with what passionate solicitude and sentimental attachment, for something delicately ironic in her reception of affectionate advances checked demonstration in its early stages. But Mrs. Baxter did not feel the less, and she brooded often over her friend's supposed situation.

For all her foolishness, she had, as she had truly told Keith, a smattering of that wisdom about life which an experienced woman over forty can hardly escape. She had spent hours of every day of her life in discussion of the love taffairs of her friends, and she had had an affair or two of her own from which she had learned something.

She knew that love is more important to a woman than the writing of plays, and she had found Keith attractive enough to herself, to see in him a husband as nearly good enough for Mellicent as any one she was at all likely to find. She wished with all her heart that there were something she could do to bring them together. She would have maneuvered to have them meet at her table but that she was afraid of Mellicent. She was afraid even to mention Keith to the girl whom she supposed to be his wife.

Other people were not restrained, of course, by any such delicacy, and it happened that Mellicent was hearing a good deal just now about Randall from several of their mutual friends and notably from the man who published her plays very preciously in volumes of three or four, and a terribly select small number of other books each year.

"I don't suppose you ever read any-

thing of Keith Randall's, did you?" he began one day, breaking away from the discussion they had been engaged upon, of bringing out "Flood Tide" in a little volume by itself.

Mellicent started slightly at the name. Williams continued:

"His novels are piffle, of course, and I'd never even have read his stuff if he hadn't sent it in under another name. But the fellow can write, though all his time till now has been spent in piling up evidence to the contrary. Queer thing! I'd have said it couldn't be done-to abandon the wickedness you have committed and do that which is lawful and right! I'm bringing out a novel next month which is about as different from the work he's known by as anything well could be. There aren't too many writers in this country whom a person of intellectual sophistication can take seriously. Well, Keith Randall, absurd as it may sound, is going to be another of them."

"You make me curious to see his book," said Mellicent, far more curious really than she was willing to show. And Williams, proselytizing for his new prophet and valuing her approval very highly, said eagerly:

"I'll send you an advance copy!"

When, accordingly, she received from him a volume in uniform binding with her plays, purporting to be by one Heath Landor, she guessed readily enough who had written it and opened it with an interest she did not try to explain to herself.

It proved to be as different as possible from that other book of his, "Archer's Folly," which she had once included in her list from the Society library, and which she had put aside with a kind of embarrassment before she finished the first chapter. Of "Wings" she found herself reading well into the fifth before the sympathetic, lightly touched portrait of a cat brought back vividly to her for a moment the inci-

dents of that railway journey; she had forgotten her personal associations with the writer in the interest of his book.

But then, he was no fool, this Keith Randall! If his book was a shade pessimistic, it was in reaction, no doubt, from the "glad" persuasion he had had to maintain in his previous writing. His style was savagely, ruthlessly simple, his story the evident truth of a matter which, glossed, distorted, misinterpreted, has been written to its banal end by a thousand writers. Handled in this way it was not banal, and Mellicent finished the book in bed before she put out her light that night.

Lying in the darkness afterward, she wished that she might have read "Wings" before she and the man who was not yet its writer had spent sixteen hours in one small compartment. How they had misconstrued each other, how they had met on the very confines of personality, where they were not so much themselves as composite types of male and female Americans of given age, class, and period!

The disturbance in the night, which might have jarred them into naturalness, had only scared her deeper into her protective conventionality, and, all the time, the man whose profile she had thought too good to go with much intelligence, was the man who could write all that led up to the unforgetable paragraph that ended "Wings!"

She wished, since the gods have never allowed the reliving of unsatisfactorily spent hours, that she might meet him again. But she had made that forever impossible when she gave him a wrong address. That is the sort of thing, she thought, that cannot be got over, that no generosity can be expected to forgive. She had to reconcile herself to knowing Keith Randall only through Heath Landor's books, and if she found it a deprivation, she could blame her Victorian instincts, disciplined since then, but perhaps not even

yet so thoroughly subordinated as hoped.

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CHAPTER XVI.

Just as, halfway into June, because of the popularity of "Flood Tide," Mellicent was preparing for her departure to Provincetown, Emily ushered in upon her a majestic and prosperouslooking stranger, who said condescendingly:

"I've come to look at the flat. I've taken it."

"Taken it! This flat!" Mellicent was aghast. She had not forgotten her refusal to renew her lease, and had been meaning from day to day to notify them downstairs that, after all, she wished to do so.

"Why, you can't have. Nobody's been here!"

"I took it without seeing it, knowing the locality, and that you were the tenant, Miss Weir. I felt sure it would be all right, and it is about five hundred times as good as anything I've seen yet, and I've been looking since February!"

"But---"

It was maddening, to lose by inadvertence her entirely satisfactory apartment, in which she now felt so at home. The necessity for giving it up had disappeared with the sale of "Flood Tide's" picture rights, but Mellicent had been plunged since then into the exacting business of replacing Eve Meadows, and she had never quite realized, in her aloofness from common topics of talk, the urgency of New York's need for homes.

When her unwelcome visitor had inspected every room and every closet in the apartment, and gone away beaming, Miss Weir betook herself hastily to the agent's office, and offered wild inducements to be allowed to retain her own.

"Can't be done, Miss Weir—not a bit of use talking about it!" she was told. "You refused to renew, in writing, and Mrs. Dodd signed a perfectly good lease a week ago, at a good deal bigger increase than we asked you, I don't mind telling you. She's crazy about the apartment, and she's got plenty of money. Nothing you could offer in the way of a bonus or premium would interest her."

It seemed fairly final, and Mellicent, too stunned now to be interested in the disgustingly inferior apartment or two which he was prepared to offer her for twice what she had paid for the old one, left the office and went home to finish her packing.

In sailing and talking, in posing and acting, she would forget all these vexations during the long summer at Provincetown. Ordinarily, it was her custom to spend only a month or six weeks there, joining her family at Southampton for July and August, but this year there was a coolness between Mellicent and her family. Her mother had written:

I cannot pick up a newspaper without seeing a reference to you, and not always a flattering one. This is not fame, it is notoriety. A day or two ago Doctor Garland preached a sermon in which he spoke of "women of good birth making common cause with radicals of the lowest classes," and of "misusing intellectual and personal gifts for sensational purposes!" He, of course, had you in mind.

We did not oppose your going to New York to live, and we have always stood ready to furnish you with any money you may need, or any support of any kind. It seems to me that it was at least due to us, if you must earn your living, that you should earn it in a respectable way. You might consider how it reflects upon us, et cetera, et cetera.

Prophets are never, of course, really appreciated at home, and the lesson of that is to stay, when the prophesying mood is upon you, away from home. Mellicent accordingly wrote a considerately worded defiance of Pittsburgh and its opinions, and went to Provincetown.

She came back to New York the first of September, for the inexorable, hopeless apartment hunt, to which she had allotted a full month in the expectation that it would surely take much less time; her lease expired with the month.

She saw, through sultry, lifeless days, a succession of impossible apartments, nearly all of which proved, in addition to other disqualifying features, to be held like fortresses by desperate tenants who meant to exhaust every process of the courts in order to remain in possession.

Mellicent grew frightened, and a day came when she had to telephone a storage company to take her furniture on the last day of September, without being able to suggest any place for them to take it, except their own warehouse. It was easy to dispose of Emily by sending her back to Pittsburgh, but Mellicent was by no means ready to go herself into exile. She began a round of hotels in search of a room, and found hotel accommodation as hard to discover as an apartment.

In the lobby of the Ritz she encountered Nita Baxter, and accepted a pressing invitation to dinner.

"This town's not fit for a dog to live in in summer!" Nita said. "But I just had to come down and do some shopping. I'm going back to Atlantic City next week. Do come and have dinner with me to-night! Now I won't take no—you've simply got to come!"

"Oh, I'll come," promised Mellicent, willing enough to pour out the Odyssey of her troubles to the sure sympathy of Mrs. Baxter.

Nita's apartment was on Central Park West, on the top floor, but in an enormous building, with an expanse of green park below the windows, set with looking-glass circles and squares of water, and a freshness came in under the striped awnings which was quite foreign to the noisy, odorous district which Mellicent had left. Her own rooms

were in the disheartening disorder that precedes moving. Trunks stood about in them with dragging straps, the bookshelves yawned empty, and packing cases at their feet held their normal contents. Nita's apartment in no way expressed herself, for she had put it into the hands of a good decorator and it was, except for evidence of her own immediate untidiness—a handkerchief here, a hat there, separated gloves on floor and mantel—in apple-pie order. Mellicent, looking about her, felt a stab of unworthy envy.

"You are lucky, Nita! I suppose this place is yours for another year from day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, I renewed, you can bet your life! What they're asking me is a crime, but they've got you and it's no use kicking. When I hear other people's troubles I'm not sorry."

"I shouldn't think you would be. I feel like a tramp. I tried six hotels to-day and couldn't get in."

"Hotels are full up, dearie. Kei—some one you know, was telling me only the other day, he's in the same fix you are and trying to get hotel accommodation. They give him the laugh! No, well—"She hesitated, looking craftily at Mellicent and then away again.

"You see, I'm going to Atlantic City the first. I promised my sister to put in a month there with her. But why shouldn't you—"

What she had to say was so simple, so natural, and would have been so welcome, that Mellicent wondered at the difficulty she seemed to find in saying it, at the way she stopped on the verge of the offer, biting her lips, and changed the subject clumsily, and then returned to it.

"Mellicent, look here, you come straight to this flat on Thursday! I'll be gone—I'm leaving on an early train, to meet her in Philadelphia, but you can come right straight here!" There was no lack of heartiness about the offer, when it was once made.

"I'll be away the whole month, you see, so why shouldn't you be using the flat?"

"I suppose it would be just standing empty if I didn't?" Mellicent said, and again there was that suggestion of something oblique in Mrs. Baxter's glance.

"Well—I'd be awfully glad to feel you were here, Mellicent. Then, you see, that gives you another mouth to look around, and October's not such killing weather, and a good many people will have got settled, so the mobs won't be so bad. You'll come, won't you?"

"Nita, I certainly will. You're an angel to offer it! I'd be grateful to accept the hospitality of the janitor's basement, and this apartment of yours is perfectly lovely! It will be so restful coming home to a place that's not torn up with moving. It will make all the difference. But you must let me pay the month's rent!"

This, of course, Nita would by no means agree to.

"Get out! Don't I have to pay it whether or no? It's just an advantage to me to have you living in it. Besides—you might find another place right away. You might—might find you didn't like the arrangement."

"Not like it! Nita, I? You can't imagine the horrors I've been eager to get, and had refused me."

"Well, you mightn't like it!"

"Is it haunted?" Mellicent laughed.

"Well, that's settled, you're coming, anyway?"

Nita had acted strangely, but there could be no doubt that she wanted Mellicent to accept her offer, and the girl went home that night with a feeling of respite and a resolve to spend the first week in mere rest, putting the thought of lodging out of her head.

Leaving Emily to deal with the dis-

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tressful task of overseeing the removal, Mellicent, the day proving a cool one, went to a matinée that Thursday, and from thence, with the keys of the unhoped-for asylum in her bag, walked up to the apartment house in Central Park West. Her trunks should be here before her, and the house staff would have carried them in. Service was provided here even to the cooking of meals, and the arrangement by which Emily was to go to Pittsburgh that night had been left unaltered.

At the eleventh floor she stepped out of the lift, opened the door that was to be hers for a month, and found the button beside it that controlled the electric light.

There were several trunks in the hall -apparently all of Nita's had not yet gone. In the suit case beside her own two there was everything she would need for the night, however, and she lifted it and took it into the room that had been Nita's. She laid it on the bed, shook out a gauzy little smokecolored compromise between frock and negligee, found fresh underthings, and turned on her bath in the big and beauhathroom which had been equipped with every imaginable luxurious accessory.

An hour later she emerged, rested, refreshed, and lovely. She had twisted up her hair in the loosest and simplest way possible, and all the little short hairs about her ears and nape had curled up closely under the moist heat of the bath. Her nerves were relaxed, in no state to suggest terrors to her, and she had walked out into Nita's drawing-room with no thought remoter from her than that of danger.

The sound that came to her from the dining room was a real, unmistakable sound—a man's step, light, but not so light as to indicate precaution. There followed the slight rustle of a chair slid a few inches over matting. Then silence.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mellicent stopped petrified in her own progress, her mouth suddenly dry, a feeling of sickness accompanying the abrupt announcement of danger. She tried to master herself, tried to think, while by instinct she stood motionless and scarcely breathing, for fear her light breath might betray her to that other person who was in Nita's apartment.

No one else could have any business there, of course. What service of cleaning and the like was given by the house staff, was naturally performed early in the day. It was not yet time for the light dinner which Mellicent had ordered for herself, and that, besides, came up in the dumb-waiter, announced by a signal buzzing. No one could have routine business here, and since it was known below that Mellicent was in occupancy, no one should have entered for the most legitimate extraordinary business-the finding and sending after her, for example, of something that Nita had forgotten-without ringing and being admitted after due explanations.

There could be no doubt at all that it was a burglar.

Theoretically, Mellicent had a sympathetic attitude toward burglars. She viewed them as victims of a harsh social system, forced to steal in many instances because their earnings could not keep pace with the cost of living, or else allowed to pass to the powers of evil, in early youth, by a society which might have made a fight for them to its own profit as well as theirs.

This sort of thing reads well, and the burglar's defense of himself and arraignment of the rich, in "While God was Asleep," was considered by many people, at the time that play was produced, as the most powerful scene Miss Weir had written.

But when you are quite unprotected in an apartment many stories above the

street, whose entrance is on the farther side of the danger, you think of the burglar you can actually hear in the next room, not with sympathy, Mellicent was learning, but with quaking.

The thing to do was to run to the telephone, to call into it before he could reach her and choke her into silence, that there was a burglar here. Mellicent tried to gather herself together for the rush across the room to the telephone table. Unless she mastered her breathing, she would be able to do no more than gasp incoherently, and she waited, struggling for an approach to self-control.

The man in the other room ejaculated

amazingly:

"Where did I put that book?" And then, with even, unhurried steps he crossed to the archway and into the drawing-room.

He was no burglar. He was Keith

Randall.

Mellicent gave a long "O-o-oh!" of surprise, and sat down limply in the nearest chair.

* He, with even less warning than she had had, simply stood frowning at her in momentary unbelief of his own eyes' evidence.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded weakly, after a whole minute

had passed.

"How do you come to be here?" he

asked almost simultaneously.

"Nita lent me the apartment—for the month she's to be away!" Mellicent announced with some asperity. It was outrageous that she, the intruded upon, should be called on for explanations.

"That's awfully extraordinary," Keith said, staring, "because she lent it

to me, too!"

"Why, what nonsense! Why—she couldn't—— You must have totally misunderstood something she said! Or else—one of us three is crazy!"

"Miss Weir, do, please, be reasonable —so far as I'm concerned. Is it likely

I'd come here on a phrase I'd misunder. stood? I don't know Mrs. Baxter awfully well, though she's been very nice to me. Some people absolutely moved into my rooms while I was away for a week-end, and there were about eleven of them, mostly female and sick, and they seemed so crazy about the place and so bent on staying, that I hadn't the heart to get them thrown out, though I was advised I could. I did tell my troubles to Mrs. Baxter, but I had no more idea of her offering me a refuge here than of being invited to move into the Metropolitan. You don't imagine a thing like that, or misunderstand a chance remark into such an improbable offer! I assure you the misurderstanding was all the other way, After I thought she did mean that, I kept on quite a while assuming she meant something else, because it seemed -too good of her. If one of us three is crazy, I'm not, really I'm not-that one!"

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"Then it's Nita, clearly. But—what was she dreaming about? How could she?"

The recollection of Nita's misapprehension about them suddenly returned to Mellicent, with its explanation of how Nita could, and she felt her face flushing with anger and confusion.

"You see, of course, she does think that——" Keith began, reaching the disconcerting solution in the same moment that Mellicent did. "From her point of view, I suppose this might seem a possible thing to do. Yes, in a sort of way I suppose that lets her out."

"It doesn't let her out at all!" Mellicent interrupted furiously. "If we were married and living apart, and she thrust an arrangement like this on us, it would be impertinent, insufferable—much worse than it is!"

"Because in that case I might think

I could stay?"

"In that case! Perhaps you think you can stay, anyhow! You have such-

broad ideas about what people can do. I dare say I can find some other place

to go myself."

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"Now, please, Miss Weir! How can you be so unkind? It's so obvious that I'm odd man out, that so far I hadn't got around to mentioning it. There seems to have been so many other things that need explaining first—"

The surprise of the incredible situation brought about by Nita's audacity was by now subsiding in Keith, and he began to react more normally to Mellicent's nearness, to falter at his own readiness in parrying her reproaches. He became incoherent.

once."

Mellicent looked uncertainly toward the window. It had begun to rain since she came in, and even as she hesitated it seemed to rain harder, to settle to a steady and drenching downpour.

"You don't have to go this minute, of course," she said. "It's rain-

ing."

No, she was much, much lovelier with her own fair hair, with that fetching little glint along her eyelashes where the dark gold of them turned up to catch the light. That wispy, gray gown, with the patterned silver ribbon for its only ornament, was the most graceful dress, he thought, that a woman had ever worn.

Did this extraordinary bringing of them together change things, lower the embargo between them, or did it only make their future friendship more impossible than ever? He wondered, hoping passionately for the first. It was, surely, opportunity, and on his use or misuse of it depended the outcome.

"I can't tell you how sorry I am that you should have been annoyed like this," he said gravely, his flippant defensiveness dropped now, past regain

ing. "I don't quite see how to blame myself, but-"

"It was my fault, of course. Lought to have told Nita. How could I ever imagine she'd be such an egregious fool as this?"

"I'm sure you'd much rather I went right away at once. I know a man who'll put me up for to-night, anyhow. I'm afraid I've unpacked some of my things in the bedroom there. I'll go and get them together right away."

Over the packing he might pull himself together, try to see the situation from her point of view, to imagine what words from himself, if any, could propitiate her and show him to her as less

than odious.

Mellicent got up. It was time to send downstairs to let them know that she was ready for her dinner, and she felt more than ready for it, weak and in need of the stimulus of food. She knew that she ought in common humanity to ask Randall to stay and have dinner with her, but in her new anger at the fresh, intolerable development between them, she decided cruelly that she would not do this, even if she knew that dinner, to most men, means incomparably more than it does to most women, and that, if she was hungry, he was probably suffering more than herself from the delay of the meal.

Passing through the dining room she saw with surprise that Keith had been about to sit down to a nondescript collation that, though cold, looked appetizing still. If the chops were spoiled, the lobster salad remained appealing, and the charlottes russes to which the masculine heart is so true should have touched Mellicent as they stood in their little cups, destined to be quite unappreciated if Keith was not allowed to eat them. She loathed their insipidity.

Having ordered her own dinner, she went back into Nita's room, willing to avoid encounter with Randall until the inevitable moment of good-by.

It was not the Victorian, but the eternal in her that took her first to the dressing table, to see if she had been looking all right in the hateful interview just past. And on the dressing table, with a bottle of perfume to weight it, she found Nita's letter, which till this moment had failed to catch her eye.

What had Nita to say for herself, indeed! Angrily Mellicent tore open the envelope that should contain, not a satisfactory explanation of her behavior, because there could be none, but some sort of apology and excuse.

Nita had several pages to say for herself.

Dearest Mellicent: I do hope you won't be too angry with me when you find out what I've done. Of course, I know it's a perfectly awful thing to do, but the reason I'm doing it is because I think it's the best thing—I think it's the only thing. Of course, it may not work, after all.

But I'm forty-three years old and I know it's wonderful to write plays and all, but really, dearie, in the long run there's nothing like love!

"Love! The insufferable impertinence of this! Mellicent choked, bit her lip, rapped with her finger tips on the edge of the dressing table. Presently, with a sound of contempt, she went on.

My idea was that if you were thrown together again in some way like this, you'd get over your estrangement and be forced to talk to each other and be in the same room for a little while, anyway, and maybe Keith would have the gumption to kiss you, and then it would be all right. You can think you're so mad with a man you want to kill him, and there are a million things you've got against him that can't ever be explained or forgiven, and then he kisses you the right way, and you can see that all that didn't amount to a hill of beans.

The idea of me setting up to tell you all this sort of thing, when you write plays and understand all those emotional sides of life so much better than I can! The only excuse I've got is that when it is a question of you yourself, one doesn't always see things so clearly like if it was somebody else.

clearly like if it was somebody else.

Now, if things go right, I know you're going to forgive me and thank me. And if

they go wrong, I don't suppose you'll enforgive me. But I mean right just the same. I couldn't risk you being angry with me only because I love you so much. You don't know how much I think of you, nor yet how proud I've been to have you be friends with me. I know I'm just as commonplace and uninteresting as I can be, and you're Mellicent Weir.

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Poor old blundering Nita! Could one forgive her? Certainly not before she had been made to feel remore for her impertinent meddling with other people's lives, lives whose springs she so utterly misunderstood. What a good thing it was for Nita that she had written! Badly as she expressed herself, she could never in conversation have been able to make half so coherent an apology. Well, there was still a little more of it!

I've got just one more thing to say. I don't know what the trouble was between you and your husband. But I do know he just worships the ground you walk on.

Mellicent gave a derisive little laugh. He told me so.

She sobered, frowned.

I could see it well enough, anyway, but I asked him point-blank, and whatever you may think, you'd have had to believe the way he said he did. Did you know he went to see you act Kate nearly every night last spring? And don't you suppose a woman as old as I am can tell when she sees a man looking at another woman? He loves you all right, and don't you make any mistake about that.

Now I hope you're going to thank me, but, anyway, I want you to forgive me, because I certainly mean right by you in doing this.

With love, and praying you're going to be happy like I want to see you,

Your Loving Nita.

Mellicent was trembling a little as she laid the letter down, and, resting her elbows on the dressing table, she leaned her head on her hands.

He'd told Nita he loved her! That might have been a joke, or to fall in with some absurd supposition of hers. But to go to see her every night as Kate! He'd been out there in the house nearly every night. Nita had seen him

looking at her. She knew well enough the way Nita meant, the way a man looks at the woman he is in love with, when he thinks he is unobserved, or is too absorbed to care if he is or not.

But—how could he when she had treated him as shamefully as she had? For Keith, she was quite ready to admit to herself, had behaved perfectly throughout, and it had been her own acts, her own suspicions, her falsehood, that had made their relations impossi-

All of them sprang from that atavistic portion of her personality which she had set herself to root out and destroy.

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A kiss, as Nita had proclaimed, may do much to resolve differences, but a reliable first-hand testimony that a man loves you is almost as disarming to an angry woman. Mellicent, as it thundered overhead and the rain began to come down in real earnest, found herself thinking of Keith faring out into such weather, and the thoughts of his deferred dinner returned to her now to meet no such callous willingness to let it be delayed for an indefinite time longer.

She jumped up and went out into the other room,

He was standing there irresolute, his packed suit case beside him, probably debating whether to hail her or wait till she appeared to say good-by—and the other thing that he had planned to say.

"Oh, Miss Weir!" he began hesitatingly. "There's just one thing. My cat—you remember Pasht? She's asleep on the bed in there. I wonder if you'd be so awfully kind as to let her stay till I have a place for her?"

It was really clever of Keith, and killed several birds by one simple stroke. It asked a favor of Mellicent, and that is the best way in the world, of course, to appease a person whose soul has a grain of generosity in it. It solved the rather pressing problem

of what to do with Pasht while Randall went in the rain from hotel to hotel and friend to friend, and it provided a perfect pretext for future visits to the apartment.

"Why, of course, Mr. Randall I shall love to have her—she's a darling! But you—I didn't mean for you to go without your dinner! Those chops could be warmed up again in a minute—and my own dinner is just ready."

"Oh, would you let me stay and have dinner with you?" His delight was touching.

"Of course. I can't let you go while it's raining cats and dogs like this. I'm terribly hungry, aren't you?"

He had been, but he had forgotten it. He helped Mellicent carry in her own meal and the dishes for serving it. He warmed his chops hastily and they sat down, before five minutes had passed, to a meal whose intimacy, to him at least, was intoxicating and its constituents entirely unimportant.

Mellicent was distraite, gracious, but absent as she conveyed food to her plate, pushed it about, and brooded. The issue was terribly distinct before her, the thing she ought to do terribly clear. But there was a last fight with the stubborn Victorian who would not die

Outside the rain was coming down harder and harder. The evening paper at which she had glanced before her bath had spoken of hotels full to the point where they could take no more, of armories open to receive homeless families. She could not help wondering whether the hospitable friend of whom Keith had spoken might not be apocryphal, because it was obvious that he would have wished to speak reassuringly, that whether the friend existed or not he must declare with the same positiveness that he did, and that his night's lodging was assured.

Once there was a girl who had started East at a bad time without due warning, and the prospect had faced her of sitting up all night long in a crowded

day coach-

She couldn't be less generous than he, less broad, less superior to convention. Getting a strangle hold on the throat of the protesting Victorian, she spoke.

"Look here-why shouldn't you stay right where you are to-night? Do

stav!"

"Stay! Oh!" He was quite taken back, having expected nothing less than

this. "Why, I--"

"It's raining so hard. You're here, and the room in there ready and waiting. It really seems so silly that you should have to go out and wander around looking for a place to sleep when -here it is, right here. Empty if you don't use it."

"But I-I'm afraid I'd be in your

way," he protested lamely.

"In this big place? That's absurd! You know, I-I've always wanted to apologize for that silly thing I did. Giving you a false address like that. I was sorry the minute I did it. I-I can only excuse myself by telling the truth, Mr. Randall, and this is it. I'm instinctively Victorian. It's the battle of my life not to show it, to behave like the sensible modern woman that, intellectually, I am. It was just that oldfashioned cautiousness that made me do that-give that address. It's always making me do despicable things. you'd stay, you see-it would a little -make up-"

Keith sat still, injuring Nita's damask by drawing on it with a fork's prong. He said nothing till she leaned forward

and repeated again:

"Do stay. You see, I really want you to. It would show that you understand-and don't despise me!"

He flung down the fork,

"Despise you! I think you're the finest woman in the world! You stick to your opinions, you've identified yourself with the most hair-raising movements, and now you show me a sensitiveness that lets me guess what all that must have cost you. You've shirked nothing!"

She had flushed with pleasure at his praise, but she interrupted honestly.

"I did shirk going to jail." .

"Thank God for that! But what I can see so clearly from all you say is that, though you're quite sincere in asking me to stay now-it costs you something to do it. And I'm not willing to cost you anything, to buy my comfort to-night with the least little uncomfortable feeling for you. I know you trust me now to behave myself-we're not talking of crudities like that. But the arrangement isn't conventional, and you wouldn't be comfortable to know that I was here."

"Do you think I'm going to be comfortable knowing I've driven you out to tramp the streets or sit in the Pennsylvania waiting room?"

"Men have lived through worse hard-

ships than that!"

"But why should you?"

"You haven't denied that you would have a little uncomfortable feeling if I stayed here. You can't deny it truthfully. And a man, even the most modern, unsentimental, unchivalrous man, would rather be uncomfortable himself than cause discomfort to somebody he -to the woman that-oh, well, you've been frank, we're being frank-to the woman he's crazy about, has been in love with ever since he first met her!"

It wasn't quite the surprise that Keith supposed it, thanks to Nita's letter.

"I can't think why you should be,"

Mellicent said unsteadily.

"Because you're the loveliest, the bravest, the most adorableyou angry with me for saying it? In a way, this is our second meeting, but I've been in love with you for eight long months! Could you let me know if I've got any shadow of a chance at "I was sorry the minute I sent you away. I do like you. I— Oh, how can anybody tell, on the spur of the moment like this? I'm not—"

He picked up her hand and kissed the

"Are you angry now?"

"N-no!"

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He kissed the white wrist, the soft forearm, the delicious bend at the elbow.

"Angry?"

She could only shake her head now, and with the encouragement of that he was out of his chair and on his knees beside her, drawing her to him by the arm he still held. It was Mellicent's movement as much as his impulsion that completed the embrace and drew their mouths together in the long, resolving kiss for which Nita, so rightly in all her wrongness, had prayed.

"Must you go-now?" she asked, when he drew away at last,

"I must indeed go—now," Keith said, because he now so desperately wanted not to go. "If we were married, I wouldn't have to. When we are married I won't have to. Oh, Mellicent, when will you marry me, so that I won't have to go away from you?"

She let the hand that was not against his cheek lie where his hair brushed it

lightly.

"Some time—some time quite soon if you're in a hurry?"

"If I'm in a hurry! To-morrow? Will you marry me to-morrow?"

"To-morrow! Are you crazy, Keith?"

"It's very Victorian," he said soberly, "to insist on a long engagement."

"It is, of course it is! Well then if—But to-morrow's absurd!"

"When will you marry me, then?"
"I don't see how we could manage it
a minute sooner than day after to-morrow."



NIGHTMARE

ONE night upon a train I dreamed A dream of bright Palm Beach. I saw a handkerchief of red Tied round an alligator's head, While wheel chairs, weighted down with lead, Careened beyond my reach.

The moon came down and sat a while Upon the purple sand,
And crowds of coconuts came out
And danced in circles all about,
Then fled at my command.

The ocean rose and drowned the stars, And all the world went black.
Then silence came—a potent thing!
I tried and tried to shout or sing
Or scream, if I might only bring
My mind and body back!

ANNE JELLETTE.



One Kiss In Paradise

By Scammon Lockwood

Author of "De Luxe Annie," etc.

TWO young and active hobbleshod feet clattered down the bare stairs of a tenement, came out upon the sidewalk, and crossed the street to where Father Matthews, in the little cinder-paved inclosure between his house and the church, was finishing the reading of his office by the light of a huge, sputtering, dazzling, insect-luring arc lamp which hung at the sidewalk's edge.

The owner of the feet rapped upon the iron fence with a stick which he found conveniently near at hand, and thus attracted the priest's attention.

"Are you a priest?" he asked.

Father Matthews nodded, closed his breviary, and came to the fence.

"I'm Julius Drovsky. Ma wants you should come over. There's an old lady sick," said the boy.

"Does she want a Catholic priest?" asked Father Matthews. He had noted the Semitic cast of the lad's features and thought he may have, by mistake, come to a church instead of a synagogue.

Young Julius Drovsky shook his head vacantly.

"I don't know. Ma said I should ask you. She's our roomer, but she ain't now paid her rent for a month."

"Is she very sick?"

The boy nodded vigorously. "They think she is goin' to soon croak."

"What did you say your mother's name was?"

"Mrs. Drovsky. And mine it is Julius. We live across there on the third floor."

"And what is the sick lady's name?"
"Miss Henderson. She worked by
Kellarbaum's pants shop. But she ain't

Tewish."

"Tell your mother and Miss Henderson that I'll be over at once, Julius." With this Father Matthews slipped his book into the pocket of his frayed alpaca coat and went into the house, while the boy retraced his steps across the street.

The priest changed to a black cloth coat, made the usual preparations for the sick calls, and followed to the tenement where the Drovskys lived.

At the entrance, a slender, gray-haired-man of medium height was standing, hesitant. There were many things about this individual that caught the priest's notice. His outer garments were manifestly expensive, his linen was fine and immaculate, his hat nearly new, his gray gloves spotless, his shoes more costly than any that had trod those immediate pavements for probably some years.

Yet conspicious as his attire rendered him in this region of poverty and squalor, it was not his dress that particularly drew the priest's notice. It was the man's shrinking, oversensitive face, which bore the expression of one who has suffered all his life with a continuous nervous apprehension of pain, rather than from its reality.

As Father Matthews approached, the man spoke.

"Pardon me, do you happen to be going up to see Miss Henderson?"

"Yes, I have just been called." "Then you don't know how she is?"

"No, this is my first call."

"I was just sent for, too," said the "I cannot understand it. I had no idea she was in the city, much less in such a neighborhood. I haven't heard from her for years. Had I better wait until you get through or would you like me to go up first?"

"As it was an urgent call, perhaps I had better go up first," said Father Matthews. "When I come down I'll

tell you how she is."

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"Thank you. You won't be long, will you?"

"Probably not more than fifteen or twenty minutes."

The man glanced up and down the street and his finely chiseled nostrils seemed to dilate slightly, as if sensing and shuddering at the conglomerate odors of that part of the town.

"Well," he finally said, "I'll wait, but it's horrible here—the smells, the noises. the people!" He appeared to quiver all over with disgust and apprehension. "I hope it won't be long, but I'll try to wait."

"If you will give me your name, I'll

tell her you are waiting."

"No, perhaps you had better not. I -I might not be able to wait," was the reply in a shaking voice. And then, as if ashamed of himself, he added, "It must have been terrible for her here."

Father Matthews nodded without spoken comment and went in. Three flights up he stopped and hesitated, not being quite certain of the floor. But at the instant a door opened, and Mrs. Drovsky, fat, short, nasally loquacious, beckoned him.

"She's in here. I know you from seeing you across the street. She roomed by us ever since my Hattie and her got acquainted by Kellarbaum's pants shop. We never knew she was Catholic until just a few minutes ago she asked we should send for a priest." It was plain to Father Matthews that young Julius Drovsky's disregard for coherence was an honest inheritance.

"Have you had a doctor?" he asked. following Mrs. Drovsky into one of the four rooms which her family and her

lodger occupied.

"Sure, twice he was here, and he charges two dollars a visit, and if she wouldn't get well, but would instead die, the bill would be on us." Mrs. Drovsky was reasonably kind to the sick woman under her roof, but she wanted the fact distinctly understood.

Father Matthews gravely and appreciatively inclined his head. He knew these poor Russian and Polish Iews who were sprinkled throughout his cosmopolitan parish; and he knew most of them to be the kindest people in the world to the sick or unfortunate, even when not of their own race or faith. It occurred to him that a long heredity of suffering had put the charity of Christ even into those who denied Him.

Mrs. Drovsky opened a door and motioned for the priest to enter. It was a bare and tiny room. On a cot in one corner a woman lay gasping. A child

was listlessly fanning her.

At first glance, Father Matthews thought the patient to be at least ninety years old. Then, as he came closer, he saw that, though the face was lined and seamed, the skin was not of that parchment quality which usually goes with extreme years. He observed, too, that the woman at one time must have been exceedingly beautiful, for even yet her features were regular and well formed.

These conclusions took but a mo-

ment, and then Mrs. Drovsky's highpitched, but kindly voice interrupted his thoughts.

"You could stop now, Selma, and go out. Here's the priest," she said.

At the word "priest," the sick woman's eyelids fluttered, then opened, and an expression of relief crossed her drawn face. The child dropped the fan and left the room, glad enough to be released.

Father Matthews leaned over the bed and spoke.

"Do you wish to make your confession?"

The patient nodded and tried to speak, but produced only a few low, choking gutturals. Then she pointed a white and trembling hand toward a battered, fiber suit case in one corner. Mrs. Drovsky came forward.

"It's the schnapps she wants. For three days she kept herself goin' on it at the pants shop, and the forelady knew it, too, and never said a word, and that is why she is now took so bad. And the doctor said she shouldn't have no more unless she must talk."

"Brandy! Brandy!" the sick woman managed to ejaculate, and seemed almost to expire with the effort. Mrs. Drovsky shrugged her shoulders as much as to say that it wouldn't make any difference, went to the suit case, opened it, and took out a pint flask nearly full of cheap spirits. She poured a few drops into a tumbler, raised the patient's head, and let her swallow the fiery liquor.

"Some water?" she asked, nodding toward a pitcher which stood on the table.

But the woman on the cot merely shook her head.

"Would you want I should stay?" Again came the shake of the head, and Mrs. Drovsky went to the door and then, turning, said:

"If you would want anything, you

could just call." And she went out closing the door with ostentatious quiet

The priest observed that the brandy had drawn a faint color to his penitent's cheeks, so he leaned forward and again asked:

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"Do you wish to make your confession?"

"Yes, father," came the prompt reply. "I can speak now; for a moment I was choked up. I think it must be pneumonia." The accents and intonation were so refined that the priest was amazed at hearing them in such an environment. He drew an old chair to the edge of the cot, sat down, and turned an ear toward her and made the sign of the cross.

She murmured the familiar opening prayer for a blessing, and then, according to the ritual, he asked:

"How long is it since your last confession?"

"Fifty-one years, father," she replied in a tremulous voice.

"Oh, my child!" exclaimed the priest. "That is a long time."

"I know, father, it has been terrible."
"But why did you stay away so long from the holy sacraments?"

"It was on account of a sin, father, that I could never bring myself to con-

"And are you now ready to confess all, and ask the pardon of Almighty God?"

Into the sick woman's eyes there came a look of dread, almost of horror, but she replied bravely: "Yes, father, now that I know I am soon to die, it will not be so hard."

"Remember, my child," he said very gently and reassuringly, "that you are not speaking to a man, but into the ear of Almighty God, who understands all things and so can forgive offenses if only you feel true regret."

For a moment his penitent lay quite still and rigid, as if gathering all her forces for a terrific effort. Then she spoke.

"I was guilty, father, of an indiscre-

tion with a man."

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"Yes, my child," said the priest reas-"Do you mean that you are guilty of a serious offense against the Seventh Commandment?"

"I-I think so, father, but perhaps I had better explain everything, and then you will understand perfectly."

"It was when I was a girl of twenty, father. We lived in a small town down on the Ohio River. I was the only child and my parents, who were in comfortable circumstances, although not rich, petted me a good deal. We were Catholics. It was while I was still in school that I met him, this man I have spoken of. He had come from another city, and almost the first time I met him, I loved him.

"Oh, father, love is a terrible thing! Such suffering, such agonies it causes, and yet you welcome the worst sufferings for the sake of the joy of loving. Oh, yes, father, it it better to have loved and had nothing but suffering from it than not to have known what love is. We are not completely born, we do not awaken into perfect consciousness, we are not fit to die until we have loved greatly."

"Yes, my child, yes, but you say that this was a sinful love, so you must not dwell upon it."

"It was not the love that was sinful, father, it was what I did. Well, we went places together, and he seemed to enjoy my society. He called at our house and my parents liked him very much. Oh, father, he was a man of the most extraordinary refinement and delicacy of feeling; a real Sir Galahad. That is what makes what I have to confess seem so impossible now. He was a man to whom it was torture to look upon suffering or ugliness of any sort."

She paused a moment as if to gather fresh strength.

"I must tell it all to you, fathereverything, every circumstance, or you would not understand."

"Yes, yes, my child, tell us much as you think necessary," said Father Mat-

thews reassuringly.

"Perhaps I had better take a little more of the brandy; I feel myself growing weaker, and there is much to say."

The priest gave her another mouthful of the ardent spirits and she went on:

"He was not a Catholic, but so free from the common, ignorant prejudices and bigotries which flourish in a small town, that I think he will, perhaps, receive the gift of faith before he dies."

"Then he is still living?" Thinking of the man in the vestibule downstairs, Father Matthews could not repress the

question.

"Oh, yes, he is still living. When I realized that I must die, I sent word to the last address of his that I had. As it was here in town, perhaps he will come in to see me."

"But that was very wrong, my child," said the priest sternly, yet kindly. "You should not seek to see the partner of your sin."

"Oh, but he was not the partner of my sin, father; he had nothing to do with it."

"But I thought you said you were guilty of an indiscretion with a--" The priest began and then stopped. He was beginning to realize that he was dealing with a peculiar, possibly an extraordinary, conscience. "Perhaps you had better tell me the story in your own way," he continued after a pause.

"Well, we became the best of friends, and finally many people in the town thought that we were engaged to be married. But he had never asked me or in any way referred to marriage. And, oh, father, I could not conceal from myself that I loved him. My mother had always said that a nice girl should not admit, even to herself, that she loved a man until he had asked her to marry him. But I found that I could not turn my affections off or on like a faucet in that way. I loved him just a little bit more every time I saw him, and it gave me the most sublime happiness just to think of him and my love." As she spoke, the worn old woman's face became transfigured; the lines and hollows seemed to vanish and the cherry blossom of her cheeks and the corn-flower of her eves for the moment returned. "Ah, father, it was as if I had been given one peep into paradise to encourage me to live such a life as would merit it for all eternity. I think it is that remembrance which urges me to seek God's forgiveness now that I am about to die."

For a moment she lay still, as if contemplating a vision, and then continued:

"As I have said, I could not conceal from myself that I loved him. finally I began to fear that I could not conceal it from him, from the whole world. It seemed to me that my love was such a tremendous thing that somehow every one must be aware of it; that to conceal it would be as impossible as trying to hide a mountain or the sea. When he came into my presence my blood flowed faster. I seemed to grow taller, to become more sentient, to have all my senses sharpened and stimulated, so that the perfume of a wild rose was actually intoxicating. I stood as if on the tiptoe of happiness.

"Sometimes, when I was up early on summer mornings and out in our garden, I would notice the drooped and half-withered flowers raise their heads and become beautiful blossoms at the first touch of the sun's rays, and I would tremble with fear that I could not conceal my love from the world any more than these flowers could conceal from all beholders the fact that the sun restored them to the glory of their day-

time beauty.

"You must pardon me, father, if I

bring out things or say things that unnecessary, for you see, I have bed many years of speechless thinking above all this."

"So, fearing that the whole world might see, I tried to be less cordial to him in the presence of others, and then in some way, to make it up to him when we were alone together, for I was in panic lest I do something to drive him This fear was increased because of his being, as I have told you a man of the most marvelous sensitive-

ness and delicacy.

"These qualities in him gave me such a feeling of safety in his company, for I was more than ordinarily timid with And my mother had increased this natural timidity by warning me that I must beware of the advances of men: particularly those of a certain type. She had told me that it was very wrong to let a man put his arm about me or touch me in any way. She had spoken about this many, many times and cautioned me repeatedly. But from him I had nothing to fear, for he did not have the rough desires of ordinary men.

"Soon a dreadful fear began to oppress me. I don't know why it was I had never thought of it before, but now I saw that he might soon be leaving town. And finally, one Sunday evening, when he was taking supper at our house, this fear was confirmed. He told us that he was leaving the next day and was planning to settle out in

California.

"At first I was almost paralyzed with grief, made the worse because I could not show it, but must continue smiling and chatting. But I could not keep up the pretense of not caring. I fell silent; I ate nothing; I sat speechless, stunned.

"After supper he proposed a walk. I, of course, agreed, and we started. Oh, how that evening comes back to me! Father, have you ever smelled the honeysuckle blossom of the Ohio Valley on a warm, moonlit evening? And yet, no, unless you were twenty and in love you could not understand. But when you are twenty and deeply in love the fragrance of flowers and the light of a full June moon combines into the most potent drug in all creation. Ah, it was a moment of paradise!

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"So we went for our last walk together, and it was then that I committed the sin for which I find it so hard to be truly sorry. Yes, father, we had not gone very far before a madness possessed me, and I did what I should not have done. I seized his arm. not forget my mother's teaching. knew I was doing wrong, but I could not do otherwise. And, oh, it was good to grasp his arm that way. First I just held it in my own arm, then I squeezed it tightly, then I put my other hand over and held on to his arm with both my hands, while we walked, I do not know how long or where. Oh, it was a tremendous delight to me, father! I suppose that heaven will be some such happiness, with the sinfulness removed. And then, as he turned to help me over a stile, I turned and kissed him. It was wrong, father. I know it was a terrible, terrible sin, but, oh, father, it seemed for the moment like paradise!"

"And is that all?" asked Father Mat-

"Yes, father. It has been very hard to confess, and until now I could not be sorry. We were embarrassed, constrained for the remainder of the walk, and when we reached the house he bade me good evening and hurried away. He left town the next day, and I have never seen him since, though in different ways I have kept track of him and know where he is."

Despite the reverence he felt for his office, despite the pity he felt for this dying old woman, Father Matthews had difficulty for a moment in repressing a mad impulse to burst into laughter. During forty years of confessions, a

priest hears strange things. Human beings sometimes have odd ideas as to what constitutes an offense against the Almighty. And then, besides, his impulse was partly due to relief. And then, of course, he didn't laugh. Almost instantly he saw the other side of the matter. He saw the pitiful side and a feeling of warm compassion brought a few dimming drops to his eyes. And then, once more, he became the priest in the exercise of his holy office.

"Do you really mean that that is all you have to confess?" he asked. "That was not a sin."

The dying woman started up and sank back on her poor, flat pillow.

"No sin!" she exclaimed. "But my mother told me it was a sin to allow a man to touch me, and how much greater to do what I did!"

"Not a sin, my child; your mother made a very common mistake in the word she used; it was merely a slight fault—hardly that. Oh, it is a great, a terrible pity that such a trifling thing should have kept you all these years from the holy sacraments!"

"Father, my sickness has not made me hear you incorrectly, has it? Did you say that it was no sin? Will you speak very quietly and plainly so that I may be sure?"

"You understood me perfectly," the priest replied. "What you did was no sin."

"Then I may think of it as I die!" She spoke with almost a lyric note in her weak, old voice. "Then I may smell the honeysuckle and see the moon and feel his arm as I clasped it that evening and his lips on mine, and it will not be wrong!"

"Yes, but let us hope that there is a possibility of your recovering."

The sick woman shuddered with apprehension.

"No, I don't want to get well. You see, I know now what heaven is, father, and if I may hope for it, I want to die."

"Would you perhaps care to see the man you love?" asked Father Matthews, forgetting for a moment that he was hearing a confession, and thinking of the old man waiting below.

"I don't know, father. Perhaps he could not be found."

"Did he go West as he planned?"

"Yes, the next day. But I think he is now in this city. You see, I have always managed to keep track of him no matter where I went."

"Oh, then you have been away from your home for some time?"

"Oh, yes, father, when I could not confess, and so stopped going to the sacraments, I found things so uncomfortable at home, all my pleasant relations so strained, that I went to another smaller town and worked for a dressmaker there. Years after, my parents died, but left me very little, and that went to pay the expenses of a long illness and nervous breakdown I had had.

"Then things went worse with me. I moved to Indianapolis, and finally came to this city and worked in various clothing factories. But I always managed to know where he was. Somehow the knowledge that he was on earth and had never married gave me great comfort. And so, when I was taken so sick, I sent him word. It is the first he has received from me since we were young. He may have forgotten me utterly."

The priest was about to tell her that an elderly man was below asking for her, but he noticed, what to his experienced eye looked like symptoms of a sinking spell. He suddenly remembered that he was hearing a confession. "Is there nothing else you wish to confess?"

"Nothing, father."

"Make an act of contrition for having been away from your duties so long, and I will give you absolution."

The sick woman murmured her

prayer and the priest his absolvo. Then she whispered:

"May I have communion? You do not know how I have longed for it all these years."

He nodded, took an end of a blessed candle from his pocket, set it up on the old bureau, and lighted it. Then he administered the communion and extreme unction according to ritual.

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He was about to ask the dying woman if she wished to see the man downstairs, when there came an ostentatiously delicate knock at the door and Mrs. Drovsky looked in.

"The doctor, he is here again," she whispered. And then she added, "But. he wouldn't charge for this visit because he was just passing by. Would I tell him he should come in?"

"I think he had better," was the re-

Whereupon Mrs. Drovsky turned and nodded to some one behind her, and a boyish-faced physician entered, went to the cot, spoke kindly to the old gentlewoman, felt her pulse, and listened to her heart.

"She is very low," he said, and Father Matthews then observed that a sudden change had taken place in his penitent. She seemed completely relaxed and the suggestion of color, brought on partly by the brandy, partly by the excitement, had given place to a waxen pallor.

"She will die at any moment, I think," said the doctor.

And then they stood silently, expectantly, about the room, watching this last struggle of all flesh. They spoke in whispers of ordinary things not associated with death. The priest mopped his brow and remarked that it was very warm, and the doctor replied that it was not the heat, but the humidity that caused so much suffering. It is with these commonplace subjects that human beings still drive off the ancient terror of death's presence.

And then, presently, they saw that the end was imminent.

The dying woman's eyelids fluttered a moment and then opened. She looked at the priest and smiled. "Oh, father," she gasped, "I smell the honeysuckle! I feel his arm in mine! My lips on his! I am so happy, so happy!" Then she sank back and closed her eyes, and a momentary spasm shook her whole worn frame. And then she lay still.

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"I think that was the end," said the doctor, leaning down and again lifting the limp hand. "Yes," he nodded, turning back the eyelids. "Yes, she is dead."

Mrs. Drovsky, as if released by a trigger, was at once violently active. She sent her small son clattering on his way to the favored undertaker, and then began to put the room to rights.

The priest followed the doctor down the rickety, squeaky stairs, and the latter hurried away to answer other urgent calls.

The man whom Father Matthews had seen just before he went up to the sick room was still standing in the doorway, nervously shifting from one foot to another and glancing up at every sound.

"Do you think I had better go up now?" he asked.

Father Matthews looked curiously a moment at this strange old man and then replied:

"Miss Henderson is dead."

"Dead!" repeated the man, as if profoundly shocked. Yet over his face there came an expression of relief. "Dead! I'd like to do something if I could; she was a great deal to me."

"Are you a relative?"

"No, only an old friend."

"Do you know whether or not she has any living relatives."

"No near ones, I believe."

"You can only help now by seeing to it that she has proper burial, and perhaps by attending to her doctor and other bills. These people here are poor." "I'll gladly do that!" the old man exclaimed. "Gladly! I wish I could do more."

"We cannot any of us do much for the dead," said Father Matthews. "Did you not know the poor circumstances in which she has been living?"

"No. I knew nothing."

"Oh, I must have misunderstood; I thought you said she was on old friend."

"She was, but I haven't seen or heard from her in fifty-one years."

"Fifty-one years," the priest repeated, thinking of the dead woman's confession and now feeling sure that this must be the man she had so loved.

"Yes, I knew her when she was a girl," the man explained. He paused and then added in the tremulous whisper a timid lover would use to his beloved, "I loved her then and I've loved her ever since."

"And did you think that she did not return your love?"

The man gave a quick, nervous shake of his head.

"I could not tell; I never spoke to her of my feelings."

"You loved her and you never told her so." The priest, knowing what he did, could not repress a note very near to sternness. "Did it not occur to you that you might be spoiling two lives instead of only one?"

"Yes, yes, often I thought of that. But something happened which rendered it impossible for me to ask her to marry me. Few people could understand, but you are a priest and perhaps by now have a better understanding of human nature than is common; so I will tell you. As you can see, I am horribly sensitive; all my life I have suffered tortures on that account."

"Did you never try to overcome it?" questioned the priest. "You know what people call sensitiveness is usually merely another form of egoism."

"Yes, I know, but I was in a measure different. You remember what Spinoza taught—that though one realize the flaws in his nature, he cannot act as if they did not exist."

"Spinoza was not infallible," said the priest, more as if he spoke to the street, the city, the whole race of men, than to this single individual. "But we must not argue; you wished to tell me something more?"

The man nodded and continued.

"I lived in her home town for several years. Oh, she was an exquisitely beautiful creature, small, deliciously slender, without being angular, with hair and eyes and complexion all beautiful and all in perfect harmony! Yet, she was not of the doll type, but had character in her face and really was a splendid type of young woman. Finally, I planned to go West and enter business on the coast, though I already had a fair income, and I decided that before I left I would ask her to marry me.

"For two years I had wanted to do so and had waited because I feared to interrupt the delightful friendship that existed between us. Well, I shall never forget the last evening I ever saw her. It was June; it was moonlight, and the moist warm air was heavy with that delicious odor of honeysuckle which grows in such profusion through the

Ohio Valley.

"We went for a walk. I was on the point of asking her to be my wife, of telling her how I had loved her for two years, when something happened which completely upset my resolution. Few people could understand, but I have a feeling that you will. I have no idea what caused her to do it—she had always been the very sublimation of refinement—but all of a sudden, while we were walking down an unfrequented lane, she seized my arm and clung to it and suddenly kissed me in such a violent, indelicate way that J was hor-

rified. This so completely upset my idea of her character that I hesitated about asking the question I had determined upon."

For the second time that evening Father Matthews felt a momentary desire to laugh. But he had less trouble now in suppressing it. For, all of a sudden. it came over him that, silly as the thing seemed to him and would seem to any healthy, normal person, it was tragic, oh, terribly tragic to two human beings. He had first wanted to laugh at the old woman because of her odd notion of sin; then he had felt an impulse to laugh at this queer old man who ran away from a girl because she kissed him; but now he felt a great pity for them both. But he said nothing, He merely continued to listen.

"I think I might eventually have gone ahead despite this, only her act caused me to recall other things that had affected me very unpleasantly; for example, once when I was about to dine at their house, I had washed my hands after her and had noticed that she had left some of her lather on the soap; and again I remembered another time when I had seen her with a little crumb of

cake clinging to her lip."

The old man paused, and now the priest, despite habitual charity for all, had in his heart a feeling of indignation and utter scorn that he could not master, scorn for the man's silly sensitiveness, and indignation that he had let it wreck a lovely life. Then he looked the man full in the face. The poor creature's features wore the expression of one who had gone through some terrible ordeal. They were drawn and twisted and in the eyes was a palpable horror. Instantly the contempt and scorn of the priest were changed to a profound pity.

"You can understand, can't you, father?" he went on like some inquisitorial victim in the agony of the rack. "I had no idea it would cause me such suffering just to tell you this. I have tried to keep it all out of my mind for years. Several times, after I went West, I determined to write to her and ask her to marry me; once I did write and mailed the letter and was nearly frantic until I got it stopped by the post-office officials. You can understand, can't you?"

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rial "I uch The priest put his hand reassuringly on the other's trembling shoulder.

"Yes, I understand," he replied with perfect truthfulness. "You have my great sympathy."

"Thank you, father. But tell me, did she in any way refer to me before she died?"

"Did you not say that she sent for you? That would show that you were in her thoughts."

"Oh, how I wish I had known before that she was here, that I might at least have done something to ease her last moments! Oh, I shall never get over my regret for it all. But it seemed impossible to act differently." Tears came into the man's eyes and he did not even trouble to brush them away; for the moment he had forgotten himself and he let the drops trickle over his cheeks and fall to the dusty floor.

Little Julius Drovsky now appeared in the doorway, followed by one of the neighborhood's numerous undertakers. Seeing Father Matthews, he stopped.

"The man wants to know who would pay?" Julius said.

"I will see that everything is attended to," said the priest. "You can have all the bills sent to me. This gentleman has promised to take care of everything. Tell your mother that includes the doctor's bills and any arrears there may be in Miss Henderson's board. You wish that, don't you?" asked the priest, turning to the old man.

"Of course, of course. I'll be very

glad to pay for everything." And he scribbled an address on his card and gave it to Father Matthews.

The undertaker started up the stairs, but the priest detained him.

"You will supply a white casket for the deceased," he directed,

"White, yes, if you say so," said the undertaker, and followed the boy upstairs.

"I will send flowers, father," said the old man after a pause.

"Yes, yes, of course," replied the priest absently, "many, many flowers." He was thinking of other deaths, of other human beings he had seen at that revealing moment, and he was making comparisons. And he was thinking of marriage and its intimacies and the fearful coming of children into the world. He tried to picture these two living that gross, average, human, normal life. He could not. His faith that somehow all is correctly ordered was strengthened.

"Well, I must go," the other said finally, and then, sensing the priest's mood, added. "The mystery of death is almost overpowering, isn't it, father?"

Father Matthews gravely inclined his head and then slowly surveyed this man who, during all his years, had been pricked and tortured by the nettle of life because he lacked the courage to grasp it firmly.

"Yes, death is a terrible mystery, but it is not the greatest mystery. Life is all mysteries. There are the mysteries of the human heart. It seems to me that there are more mysteries in one single human organism than in all theology. Without trust in God and a firm faith, I should go mad with the mysteries that surround me. Good night, my son. I hope you may have as radiantly happy a death as that of the woman you loved."





The Fifth Hole

By Marie Van Vorst

Author of "Big Tremaine,"
"Mary Moreland," etc.

THERE'S Snaith, by Jove!" Hereford said.

The girl under the red parasol leaned over the box.

"Point him out, Tommy. I'm crazy to meet him!"

"Standing by the Burke box. I'll ask him to come up."

The steeplechase was being run as Snaith came into the Hereford box, and the girl under the red parasol, standing upon a chair and taking an unmistakable interest in the race, did not meet him until she had seen the horse on which she had put more than she could afford win the Fernside Cup. Then she glanced him over to see if she had done well to be crazy to meet him, and when they walked up to the clubhouse together later, she shot out a question to him.

"They say—you don't play golf—any more—Mr. Snaith?"

"Do they? Well, it's true."

"But you won the California competition!"

"You're a great golfer, aren't you, Miss Moore?" he asked the girl under the red parasol.

"Love it! Can't imagine giving it up!"

That night in the smoking room when the best host on Long Island lit for her the kind of cigarette she ordered by thousands, and of which she only smoked an inch or two before throwing away, she said:

"Tommy, believe me, there's an awful mystery about your Mr. Snaith!"

"He's as commonplace as a bowl of Scotch broth!" Hereford said.

"Why did he drop golf, after playing the world?"

"Ask him!"

"I did-and he turned white as death."

"Ask him over again. Here, Snaith!"
The best host on Long Island rolled over to Snaith an outrageously comfortable chair and took its mate himself with the after-dinner sigh of complete content which only a multimillionaire with a perfect digestion can achieve.

The girl who was staying in the house had the third of those scandalously luxurious chairs.

"She looks," Snaith thought, "as if she had landed on a poppy bank."

Hereford said:

"Cynthia thinks you are mysterious, old chap!"

"Tommy, what a fiend you are!" breathed the girl in the red chair.

"I think it is an awful compliment!" Hereford said. "Tell us why you don't play golf? You'll be on the links by Monday, I'll bet you a hundred dollars!"

"You lose, old man." Snaith put out his hand.

"There!" The girl in the red chair sat forward. "It is mysterious."

"Tell us about it, Snaith, and let it last until midnight." The best host on Long Island yawned behind his glass of whisky.

"It's a long story, I warn you people." Snaith looked at his audience: Tommy Hereford indulgent, a bit somnolent, a high ball in his hand, and a cigarette in his mouth; a week-end guest stretched out his length in the window seat reading; and then the girl who was staying in the house in the

poppy-red chair, and there Snaith stopped as if he wished her the only audience.

"I like racing nearly as well as you do," he addressed the girl, "and in June, the year before the war, I was in Paris running a horse for the Grand Prix."

"How heavenly! Did he win?"

"He did not." Snaith laughed. "But that has nothing to do with golf. It was the reason, however, for my being in Europe then, and one afternoon rather latish I ran out to Saint-Cloud for a few holes of golf before dinner."

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"Darned pretty course, that Saint-Cloud course!" said Hereford. "I was one of the founders of the club."

Snaith looked at him benevolently. "I never saw an American who liked Paris who did not claim to be on the list of original founders of the Saint-Cloud Golf. It is a good little course! Nothing exciting, but nice. There was no one much playing that afternoon. It was cold and raw. I always keep clubs there, and as I started away from the first tee I saw a lady getting ready to drive off, and waited to see her get well away. She was tall, rather too tall."

"How tall is that?" asked the girl whom he wished was the only audience.

"But she was so perfectly set up, one did not mind. She had, in point of fact, a perfect golf figure." Snaith looked at Miss Moore as if he thought she had as well a perfect golf figure. "She wore a blue-plaid skirt—a Scotch plaid."

The girl nodded.

"I know—from MacIntyres, Sackville Street. They are awfully smart! You speak as if you were describing her for one of the fashion magazines."

"I grew to know her clothes well they suited her down to the ground. And she wore a yellow sweater like mustard flowers, soft and bright in the dull atmosphere. She had no hat on, and the first thing I noticed of all was marvelous black hair!"

"Oh!" said the girl whose hair was the color of July wheat. "Black hair!"

"She drove off a clean drive in excellent form and started after her ball. She had no caddy and no clubs but the one she carried. I drove a bit beyond her."

"She must have played darned good golf," murmured Hereford.

"I followed along across the first field—I can see her now swinging along in the gray mist, tall——"

"A bit too tall," murmured Miss Moore.

Moore.

"And as I came up to her she turned round and—"

"You saw she was fifty years old!" interrupted Hereford. "Pve followed 'em like that, old man. Deceptive figures from the back!"

"She was," said Snaith, smiling, "under thirty—and the most stunning woman I ever saw!"

"Now we're off!" grinned Hereford.

"She spoke to me, asked if I had played at Saint-Cloud often, and said the links were too civilized and too formal for her taste."

"Very poor judgment," grunted Hereford. "They are quite perfect."

"She played her ball with her brassy and made a good distance. She said she was only practicing, and liked going off with no caddy and one club. I thought it was wonderful luck to pass an hour with a stunning woman, and suggested that we play together with one ball. And we did."

"Wet your whistle, old boy—I'm stiff with curiosity. What the devil did *she* have to do with your giving up golf for the rest of your life?"

Snaith took a drink of whisky and water and lit a fresh cigarette. Here the week-end guest rose from the window seat where he was outstretchedhe needed a long seat to stretch in—and said indolently:

"Before your story lights up any higher, I'll go help the lady of the house choose soft music to make it more thrilling."

Hereford glanced at the young man as he sauntered out of the room.

"Fire ahead, Snaith," he said shortly.
"We crawled along, she talked a lot, and we only played eight or nine holes.
I had to get back to Paris."

"Did she continue to run down my course?" asked Hereford. "Or did she run down the weather?"

"The weather cheered up a bit as we played back and grew quite decent—and she was wild about the French foliage, I remember, and the landscape and the greenness. The fresh greenness of it all seemed to impress her a lot for late June."

The girl in the red chair laughed softly.

"Oh, Mr. Snaith! You don't think we believe that you passed the afternoon talking about foliage!"

"Of course," said Hereford, "we saw the kind she was when she spoke to you like that."

"She was perfectly delightful—perfectly charming!" said Snaith. "If that is the *kind* you mean. I had to get back to Paris and I left her there."

"Oh, come, old chap!" said Hereford indulgently.

"We parted on the links on the fifth tee. She wanted to drive off once more, and she dismissed me in good, decided form. I drove back to Paris alone."

"Tame!" said Hereford. "Tame, Snaith! Perhaps you think we are too young to be told the truth! Miss Moore is a débutante, but I'm an old sinner. You go in the music room, Cinny, like a good girl, and stop that cursed phonograph and perhaps Snaith will tell me the truth!"

The phonograph was playing with discretion, now and then, softly and rather intermittently; there were long waits between the numbers. But the girl in the big red chair had no thought of moving. With her elbows on her knees, her chin in her palms, she looked directly at the story-teller out of honest gray eyes, and she spoke directly to the host.

"Be good, Tommy! It's only the beginning. There's a great deal more tocome."

Snaith seemed to be reading a line of Persian letters on the rug at his feet. Suddenly he glanced up at the girl and said, as a boy might say who did not want to go on:

"I'll leave it here—that's enough!"

Hereford had meantime risen and started toward the music room. He got as far as the door and then came back slowly. The lady of the house and the week-end guest were playing "Butterfly." He fell back in his chair.

"Get along, Snaith," he said shortly.
"I admit we've been rotten to interrupt you. But we'll be good!"

And the girl:

"Do go on if you can. Of course you saw her again?"

"Yes," said Snaith. "Of course I did."

Hereford mixed another high ball. "Commonplace as it sounds, I couldn't get her out of my mind. I did not play golf for some time—the war-broke out and I was officer of liaison, and it was Christmas of next year when I had a leave and I ran down for eight days to the Pyrenees."

"Did you go to Pau?" exclaimed the

"Yes."

"Dear little Pau!" she said. "And that amusing golf course with the river just crying for balls and people fishing and so cross when they get hit! And mothers wheeling baby carriages about!"

"Gay old course it sounds!" said Hereford. "I did not lay it out, Snaith!"

"Oh! It's rustic," said Snaith, "but the Pyrenees are a fine edging and background. And the club is first rate. Bully cook-fresh brook trout and you lunch out under the trees in December. I had been lunching there by myself and Adèle, a typical Frenchwoman, had been looking after me like a mother. I was crazy to get on the links and forget the war! It was great to be free with my clubs. The winter before I had played the competition there and I loved the course. I played this afternoon a few holes before I thought about the last time I had played at Saint-Cloud."

Here the girl in the red chair, who was a perfect listener, nevertheless interrupted:

"But, Mr. Snaith, you had not seen

her again between?"

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"No—but I had thought about her," said Snaith. "And all of a sudden I thought about her then in her yellow sweater and Scotch-plaid skirt and I looked over the third hole, and there she was standing near the willow waiting for me. She waved her hand high in the air. I went over to her immediately, and she was even more lovely than I remembered her to be."

"You had been remembering her a lot, hadn't you?" said the girl softly.

"One couldn't help it. She was the kind one did not forget when one had once seen her."

"I understand," said the girl.

"Gad, Snaith!" Hereford leaned forward. "You begin to give me a creepy feeling."

"Who was she, Mr. Snaith?" asked the practical girl in her not-to-be-denied voice. "You did not tell us who she was the last time."

"I did not know. I almost immediately told her my name at Saint-Cloud, but—"

"I think she belonged to the secret service," said Hereford.

"Don't mind him," said the girl softly.

"The Herefords make light of every-thing."

Snaith smoked a few moments, then he said:

"Of course I tried to find out who she was, as you can imagine. I was far more curious than you two are. We were playing down by the river when she said just for fun: 'If you like, you can call me Gloria.'"

"Cheero! Now we are getting on!"

Hereford was sitting up.

"As I spoke to her, my caddy, an old, eccentric duffer a little under a hundred years old or thereabouts, looked at me as if he thought that there was something queer about me—and he turned his back and sat down on the grass and simply gave me up!"

"Who the deuce was she, Snaith?" wondered Hereford. "I bet she was a

German spy!"

"You can't torment a woman who wants to remain incognito. As we were walking back, I thought she looked tired and pale, and a little wind was blowing and blew up her black hair. I saw under her left temple an ugly black bruise. She said that she would like to have tea with me under the trees and that it would be 'splendido!' Then I planted her naturally-I knew she was Italian! But she wouldn't confess it or deny it. She promised to tell me at tea under the trees." Snaith now looked first at Hereford, then at the quiet girl. don't mind telling you that I began to have no other thought but of her."

The eyelids of the girl opposite him

quivered. She murmured:

"She must have been wonderful perfectly wonderful!"

"She was the most fascinating woman I ever saw! A man forgot everything but herself."

"Gad!" said Hereford. "What did you do with her, Snaith? We see what she has done with you!"

"When we came back to the club I told Adèle to serve us a good tea under

the trees, with all the luxuries available in wartime, and I waited for Gloria, who went upstairs to change her golf boots. She gave me plenty of time to think about her. She stayed away so long that at last I began to wonder what was the matter and asked Adèle to go up and see if she were ill.

"Adèle came back and said there was no one upstairs at all in any of the rooms or, in fact, in the clubhouse; every one was on the links. Should she serve the tea? I said certainly not until the lady I was waiting for turned up. Adèle asked me if she was a member of the club and some one she knew.

"I told her that it was the lady in the yellow sweater and plaid skirt with whom I had been out on the links all the afternoon, and that I was waiting for the lady for whom I had ordered tea. Although I fought alongside of the French for years I didn't realize until then how keen and practical they are until I saw Adèle's cool, reasonable eyes upon me. She said: 'But there was no one with monsieur when he ordered tea for two. Monsieur was quite alone."

The phonograph had ceased for the last quarter of an hour, as if the players had realized the appropriateness of silence for this part of Snaith's story. Now, as if she, too, had been listening to an absorbing story beyond there in the music room and was reluctant to leave the spell behind her, Mrs. Tommy Hereford appeared in the doorway.

"It's nearly one, Tommy, and I am

going on up."

Only the best host on Long Island and the girl who was staying in the house were there, for Snaith had left abruptly after his last words.

The lady of the house looked from

Hereford to Miss Moore.

"But-Henry Snaith? Wasn't he

here with you all?"

The girl, who came to Mrs. Hereford, put her arm around her waist. "He has been telling us the most wonderful story, but—" Then she lowered her voice. "Do you think he is quite well, Helen? Has he been gassed, shell-shocked, or anything over there?"

Hereford, who had been looking at-

tentively at his wife, said:

"Snaith is as solid as a rock—as completely on his feet as a grand piano! What did you do with Ramsay, Nell?"

"Oh, I sent him to bed long ago," said the lady of the house coolly, but she looked not at her husband, but at Miss Moore, who was fully half a head taller than she.

"You have been playing off those funeral chants by yourself, Nell-all

alone?"

"Quite alone!' said Mrs. Hereford, still not meeting her husband's eyes.

"Ah!" breathed Cynthia Moore, "Quite alone! You make me think of Mr. Snaith's story!"

"Now, Mr. Snaith!"

Henry Snaith was sitting just below her on the last step of the three white ones which lead down to the sunken pool. Back of Miss Moore a fringe of bay and a cluster of dwarf cedars hid the upper garden, conventional, modern, without tradition, nevertheless with decidedly a piquant originality. The Hereford formal garden had real beauty. Here Miss Moore came when she wanted to be either alone or to talk with some special person.

"Now, Mr. Snaith!"

"Have you ever played on the Roman

golf course, Miss Moore?"

She had several times—in April, when the wild flowers masked the balls. She loved the red color of the earth, almost like blood, and she thought the line of the old Aqueduct marking the Roman Campagna was too fascinating for words.

"It's good sport to play there," said Snaith. "With the brooks and bridges, the ups and downs, the marshes, and the high grass! And you lose an awful lot of balls, because those half-naked boys they have there for caddies are only picturesque!" Snaith watched her from where she sat. "Gloria told me about it at Pau. Raved about it as only a person raves about his own country. I'd never been in Rome, curïously enough, and Gloria made me promise her in Pau I'd go to Italy in March and play her on the Roman links.

"She said she'd meet me March first, it was the best time. I would have promised her anything that day in Pau."

Here Snaith stared intently at the deep pool inside its white rim; it was like a circle of emerald set in snow.

"After Pau," said Snaith in a low tone, "she had become something I wanted mentally to avoid."

He looked at Miss Moore as if he did not want to avoid her in the least.

"I had come through the war without a scratch and I had no intention of becoming a victim of hallucination."

"Of course not," breathed the girl.
"Of course you wouldn't be."

"I cut out Saint-Cloud and Pau and wouldn't let myself think of it. At first she tried to possess my mind, but I wouldn't let her. I found I couldn't think of her as of a woman"— Snaith looked steadily at the red flesh-and-blood girl—"as of a woman whom I wanted to take in my arms, and when I was sent to Italy on a mission in the spring you'll hardly believe me when I tell you that I found myself booked to play golf with two Italian friends of mine and out at the golf club before I remembered that it was just where I had promised to be in March!

"I was late and the Reanos were already playing and they had left word that they would meet me on the links when I came along. I took the clubs which the Reanos had left for me with the woman in charge and stopped to drink a glass of the famous spring water 'acqua santa.' Just as I took the

glass in my hand, I looked up, and on the white wall by the little staircase I saw a big calendar with the day of the month, big and black, staring at me: March first.

"I would have put up my clubs and gone back to Rome if I had not been absolutely determined to see it out and settle it then and there with my own brain."

"I like you for it," said the perfectly practical, everyday girl. "You simply had to do it and I understand. How did you feel starting off?"

"Fine! Full of pep and not a bit nervous! I started off with the caddy and I played off all right and did not see the Reanos anywhere."

Snaith stopped to smoke a few seconds and the girl who loved the game of golf better than anything except a few special human beings, asked:

"I dare say you made the first hole in two drives. Didn't you? And when did you see her, Mr. Snaith?" She helped him.

"Down by the first brook-in the center of the little bridge, waiting. played off the hill too near the fencea rotten drive! Lost my ball in the grass—dropped another on the field, and played for the green and right into the brook. I was not steady as a rock, I can assure you! But I determined I would not speak to her or seem to be conscious of her at all. I left the caddy to fish the ball from the brook and went to the bridge, without making a sign of recognition. She stood there directly in the middle, smiling sadly at me, I thought, as if she were hurt at my not speaking to her. And she was awfully pale. She didn't move an inch, and I began to cross the bridge."

"You had cool nerve!" breathed the girl on the upper step.

"No, I didn't have nerve at all!" said Snaith. "I couldn't cross the bridge! When I saw she didn't stir I turned tail and jumped the stream! The Reanos'

caddy met me on the other side and said the Reanos were waiting for me and would meet me at the fifth hole. Gloria turned round on the bridge and came slowly along after me, swinging her club. She was absolutely real, absolutely! She seemed perfectly alive—and yet outrageously not! As I drove off from the third tee, Gloria sat down on the bank behind me and watched me drive off, holding her brassy across her knees."

"She didn't speak to you?"

"No. She followed me across the fields, but I got hold of myself and made an iron shot from the last brook to the green. I heard her laugh behind me and she said aloud: "Tremendo!"

"You certainly have got cool nerve, Mr. Smaith!" said the girl.

Snaith shook his head.

"If she had walked in front of me I couldn't have gone on! From the tee above the fifth hole I saw the Reanos down on the green waiting, and they waved up at me.

"You get to the fifth hole in one shot—a mashie shot. From the tee to the green you escape the brook. I teed my ball myself, and as I raised up, there she was, and so close to me I could almost feel her breath on my face."

The girl with the true golfer's spirit asked:

"Could you drive off?"

"Yes!" said Snaith. "I did—but from the tee to the green. I must have run like a steer—I don't know how I ever got there. She was floating by my side like a breeze, and just before I got to the Reanos I stopped short to challenge her."

"Did she look at you?"

"No. She was then at the edge of the green near the fifth hole, and she stood looking at the tee from which I had just driven off and seemed to be watching some one drive off. As she stood like that she was real as you are, wonderfully alive, and on fire with the pleasure of life. She stood, her face lifted up, her eyes fixed on the fifth tee. I couldn't stir; I stood like a stone. The Reanos were calling me to come along and putt in, but I couldn't move! All of a sudden there came the sound of a terrible sickening blow, a horrible thud, and Gloria gave a short cry and I saw her fall. I heard the cry, and I looked. There was nothing there but the green, and my ball within an inch of the hole! The Reanos were coming forward laughing and asking me what was the matter with me."

Snaith stopped and the girl put her

hand lightly on his arm,

"You needn't mind confessing that you felt queer. Anybody would!"

"We all sat down on the bank," said Snaith, "and the Countess Reano said: "'Funny you should feel seedy just at

the fifth hole! My husband and I were talking of poor, dear Gloria as you were coming along across the field."

Now Snaith turned round to the girl. It seemed as if something weird and strange and sickening had slipped from him and away forever in her presence.

"Four years ago on the first of March," Snaith said, "Princess Gloria Sarazano, the fastest of that gay Roman set—you know it—had planned to run off with her lover. She was leaving behind her her husband and three little children. She and Del Monte were great golfers and played all the time together. But—something was against her luck and her passion, for as she was standing at the fifth hole, looking up at Del Monte, he drove off a smashing ball and it struck her full in the temple and she fell, instantly killed."

Snaith made a gesture and rose, throwing away his cigarette.

"That's the story as it stands," he said. "I give you no explanation—I never could find any."

'Did you tell the Reanos?" asked the girl.

"Not a word."

"I think you were wise," said the

oractical Miss Moore.

"But I was all in—I don't mind confessing it—for several days, and I've never been on a links since. I know I look an awful coward, but I have never been able to take a club in my hand."

They heard the sound of voices coming from the house. The week-end guest and the lady of the house were both wandering down to the sunken pool in the little formal garden.

Miss Moore rose.

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"I am not a Roman princess," she said, smiling, "and I don't happen to have a plaid skirt and a mustard-yellow sweater, but I play a little golf and I am crazy about it, and I want you to play with me on the links now."

Henry Snaith had not been gassed or shell-shocked, and his nerves were not broken down; he only needed an attractive woman to tell him what to

do. He didn't hesitate.

"Righto!" he said. "There comes the lady of the house. We'll ask her if we can have the car."

"The Week-End Guest," the next in a series of tales by Marie Van Vorst about Long Island society life, will appear in the December AINSLEE'S. Watch for it.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

HE sings," the wise men gravely said,
"In fine and splendid fashion,
But in his voice there is no thrill
Of life's deep pain and passion;
His notes are glad as bird notes are,
But lack the splendor tragic
That time and love and pain will give
With grim and mighty magic."

"His heart has not been racked," they said,
"With suffering and sorrow.

Ah, well, these teachers shall be his
Upon some gray to-morrow;

And then—his song shall plumb the deeps
Of every human spirit,
The very heart and soul of those
Who sit, enthralled, to hear it."

Lo, even as they prophesied,
Wise in their generation,
The singer knew the tortures of
The vale of desolation;
But out of his Gethsemane
Came no new glory winging;
When life had taught its truth to him
He had no heart for singing!

BERTON BRALEY.



The Grin

By Valma Clark

A WHISTLER'S "Nocturne" in grays, the scene before us might have been, when we turned our backs upon the garish camp fire and looked out from our cliff down upon the clear, silken gray expanse of the little lake set in the opaque, woolen gray of the blurred shore, upward to a flat gray sky with the merest beginning of an August moon above a pine tree. The far-off scream of a loon, echoing, then dying out, was even a part of the grayness and the silence and the sadness of the night.

"This place is haunted," spoke Nathan Hale abruptly, tossing away the eigarette which he had just lit. "Haunted-by a chap I knew. You were wrong, Breck," he continued slowly to me, "when you wagered no white man-before us-had camped on this exact spot since the beginning of time. I was here, eight years ago this August, with a friend. He knew this lake-loved all this neck of Canadaand brought me. We used to lie here evenings on this same old ridge, in the firelight-smoking, the two of us, not talking. Our tent stood up there, too," he added with a nod toward the pale patch which was white canvas. "He'd dive from the edge, a straight, clean dive, and go plowing across the lake toward the rising sun-a white porpoise, whistling. A splendid—ghost!"

He was speaking to himself more than to us, in the snatches of a man intent upon old landmarks, revealing a seriousness which was foreign to the Nathan Hale we knew, a good fellow, who fitted into Freddy's dinner parties, looked the finished thoroughbred he was-as perfect a product of his age as was the Apollo Adonis of that other age-talked easily and well, and possessed an amazing instinct for doing the right thing in the social world, a special gift of the gods to be accounted for, wholly, neither by birth into the Hale family, nor by education in that bluest-blooded fraternity of his university with its crested silver dating back to prehistoric times,

"Y'mean to say you've been here before, Nat Hale?" demanded Freddy, my wife, bringing him back to facts. "Well, I call you a fraud, I do! Why—" When Freddy said "why" in that tone, I knew it was to be a third degree, so I settled myself more comfortably and waited

"Dead illusions aren't pleasant," replied Nat. "You bury 'em cold and take the long way 'round the cemetery afterward. I never told any one."

Cannily, Freddy held her peace in the silence which followed, giving him a long rope. He considered our little group of three huddled intimately together, his eyes lingering upon Chase Sutherland, the girl for whom Freddy and I formed the necessary, prosaic background of official chaperons. I've decided, since, that he chose us, from the other married couples, as least objectionable because we were still moderately absorbed in each other, and because Freddy is a game little thing, the sort who expects to paddle and swing her own pack. However that may be, with his eyes on Chase Sutherland's face, touched up for a moment by the flare from a bit of dry bark, he began the story.

"Oueer sort of chap, he was-a prince in his way. A great, blond, bronzed giant, a powerful, silent person, with a body like-like a sun god. The mystery of him worked in your imagination like yeast. He admitted German blood, but beyond that not a fellow at the university knew a single fact about him. Even later, when he tolerated me. alone from all the others, on those long, silent walks, he told me nothing. the mystery of him was the least part of it. He had a strong physical appeal -magnetism, if you like. And he had a rare, flashing smile which you There was nothing couldn't forget. stolid in his silence; he gave you, somehow, a feeling of his keen joy in life, his awareness to the things around him.

"He had a passion for the open which was instinctive—nothing of the cultivated, the nature-study attitude in it. He had inherited it, as surely as a pointer inherits a nose for game, from barbaric ancestors who had prowled northern forests in Roman days, or perhaps from viking chaps who'd plowed the seas with a snoring wind. Just once I saw him in a dress suit."

Nat paused to light a cigarette, while Freddy screwed her chin into a tender spot in my shoulder.

"It was perfect, of course—a man with a body like that. But it was as incongruous on him as it would have been on—an Indian chief. He was superb in old corduroy hunting clothes, with his chest bared. Sappy—but I used to picture him standing naked with just a leopard skin belted about him. He was primitive in the way he took to the woods, the way he'd throw up his head and sniff the air, the noiseless way he'd eel that great frame of his through the underbrush. But he hadn't inherited the killing instinct—he never cared for shooting."

A chill, gray little breeze had sprung up. Nat stopped to shove another log on to the fire, and to move closer to Chase, who allowed him to pull a steamer rug over her.

"Rock's hard," stated Freddy baldly.
"If you're not using both those cushions, Breck——" I handed one over.
"Well?" she prompted, again amiable.

"He had another odd power," continued Nat after a long moment, "on a par with the swift intuition which made him feel a deer a mile off. Sometimes, after an hour's silence, he'd hit my thoughts square with a casual remark or the mention of a name. Startling, it was, as if he were a highly sensitized psychic barometer. Once, when he slept by me, I tossed for hours, my nerves strung taut, as stark awake as if I'd drunk a quart of black coffee. 'You haven't slept,' he stated toward morning. 'I've kept you awake.'

"I denied it, and said: 'You haven't spoken a word!' That was all I could get out of him. But in five minutes, I was fathoms deep in sleep."

"You mean—" questioned Chase, who was always the quiet one in the party.

"He could force you to do things with his mind," explained Nat seriously. "You'd understand, if you knew him.

"In his quiet way he went in for athletics—everything—crew, baseball, football, basketball. I could tell you tales! He was glorious, simply wiped the slate clean. Even the papers took him up and there were feature writeups. It was inevitable that he should

become a hero there at the university. His quick responsiveness to life and to you, among all the others, conveyed by just a comradely glance of his seeing, blue eyes, was the surface ripple to impenetrable depths of silence. seemed older than the rest of us; there was a reserve power of something behind that insight, something big and splendid, you felt. The fellows all recognized it, though they weren't given to analyzing. They worshiped him, but

they kept away.

"Once, at a banquet, after a big football game that we'd lost, the last of the games he was ever to play in, he gave a toast. He tossed back his hair, looked down the long table, waited as if groping for words, then raised his glass and flung out with a smile: 'To those whopping good sports who miss out-and face the music! The fellows who lose and grin!' There was that in his voice which made it more than a college toast to a bunch of college athletes, which made you wonder about his past. We remembered that toast afterward, when even the few of us-who'd stood pat in our faith in him-to that point-weakened."

Nat laughed shortly at the emotion which was husking his voice.

"Oh, I was one of the fool satellites -worse than the others," he admitted almost bitterly. Nat, who would have made such a good little modern hero himself, who doubtless had his own little group of incense burners, underclassmen, who envied him his manner in a hotel dining room, who bought their silk shirts and ties where he did!

"Then there was the girl," resumed

Nat.

Freddy wriggled closer, and Chase shivered next to me. I got up, rheumatically, to kick more wood on to the fire. It was growing colder.

"He was dead silent about her; she belonged to the deep places in him. None of us ever saw her, though one of the fellows glimpsed her photograph in his room. But it was generally known he was engaged to her." Nat brushed away the cigarette ash which had dropped on Chase's lap, and sat smok-

"How a girl could have loved him and stuck to him through thick and thin!" he exclaimed at length. "He had a sort of ruthless kindness with women-masterfulness is the word, I suppose. You could imagine him picking his woman. taking her bodily in those gentle. Zeus arms of his to his wilderness, breaking down her resistance until she would have given her soul to him if he'd asked for it. Just once he spoke of her to me." Nat's voice was low. been lying here, looking at the stars for hours. He laid down his pipe—he never smoked cigarettes. 'I'll bring her here -next year,' was what he said. And then, 'Natural feelings we're ashamed of in houses-and churches-are right out here, in God's country.'- He was silent for a long time; then, with a sudden movement, he turned over and buried his face in his arms and lay there tense. I kept thinking of the 'Ave Maria' from 'Don Juan.' Remember?

'Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer! Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!'

Silly, because it didn't fit.

"Well, we all enlisted with the war and then stayed on waiting for orders. He-couldn't pass his physical exam. I remember the way he told me: 'Turned down! Heart! Me! Hell! laughed bitterly, and I almost laughed with him-that they should reject a Titan as physically unfit. That was the only time I ever saw him bitter. He spent two perfect spring days shut in his room. He was sincere, I'd swear to it. I never believed he tried to dodge the war. But what a fighter he would have made-for a cause!"

In the pause, I decided definitely that I hadn't explored Nat sufficiently when I'd catalogued him as a perfectly good chap who'd come home with his croix de guerre, jumped into a hot tub to wash off the war grime—and the memories of two years, donned 'evening clothes, and gone to dinner and the theater. I'd talk Nat over with Freddy later.

"You may remember the ugly story about Ernsberger, who was arrested as a spy," Nat went on in matter-of-fact tones. "This chap was implicated. Everything pointed against him, but they had no definite proof. The affair was hushed up. He simply disappeared. That's all. Not much of a story. I never, for a minute, believed the German-spy stuff about him, but you couldn't go on seeing the hero in a man who'd run from things. He toppled—not because he'd lost out, but because he'd failed to grin."

"And the girl?" questioned Freddy.

"She threw him over."

A log fell with a little crash and sputter of sparks.

"How do you know—she threw him over?" asked Chase.

"General gossip," he answered briefly.
"I've been curious, always, to see the girl who would throw Kasper Nagel over." The name slipped from him unnoticed.

"Rats!" remarked my wife, who'd been still too long and who probably resented the spell Nat had cast over us. "What girl'd want to marry a spy?" Freddy, who never indulges in fancies or figures of speech, has a "stuff-and-nonsense" way of sticking pins into other people's beautiful dirigibles and watching them fall back to earth.

"And you've never—heard from him?" questioned Chase, shading her face from the fire.

"No. I've a hunch he's dead. One of those radiant, Rupert Brooke chaps, he was," finished Nat inconsistently, "doomed from the beginning."

Talk petered out. Nat, flat on his back, one arm flung upward as a head rest, seemed even to have forgotten the girl. The wind had risen and was slapping waves against the rocks down below. "If we'd only brought pop corn or something cheerful," shivered Freddy. "Where's your flash light, Breck? I'm frozen." She rose abruptly and made the first move toward eiderdown sleeping bags.

The bare events of the day that followed, when I recall them now, seem as preposterous, as coincidental, as the scenes of a cinema melodrama. It is the unreality of the setting which lends to them plausibility—though I've no intention of being paradoxical. The aspect of the place which persists with

me is its grayness.

Doubtless, in the course of a year, in that particular region of Canada, there are fifty white days and fifty more blueand-gold days to a single gray day: perhaps we struck the one gray week in months. But it was perseveringly gray. There was grayness in every shade and every form: slate-gray, pearl, dove, and blue-gray; gray moss, brittle and harsh to the touch; gray-green pines with gray-black trunks; curling, silver-gray mists: and gleaming, thread-gray rain. As the magic-lantern slides of the situation flashed out, shifting rapidly, I remained subconsciously aware of a graysheeted background, always present.

The lurid pictures were improbable, impossible, I grant you. One doesn't take a biological slide of a bleeding heart, a geological scene of an old glacial field, a psychological photograph of a nebulous, wandering soul, throw in a few modern human beings, juggle the whole, sort, with an eye to the climax, and then serve up the result in the form of a drama. Still, in a blurred and neutral setting, anything might happen. In a haunted place, we expect the incredible—it simmers down to about that.

Perhaps you'll agree with Freddy, though. When I've struggled for words to express this feeling to her, she's simply said: "Piffle! It just happened; that's all there is to it." There may be something in Freddy's platform; why bother about artistic justifications for life?

Nat, immaculate, but not too immaculate, in a rough suit which melted into the landscape, a soft shirt, and trim puttees, was the only really lively member of the party at the breakfast of singed toast and muddy coffee the following morning. Freddy, I remember, was pessimistic about a lost toothbrush. "I slipped—those rocks are slimy—and it fell into the lake," she repeated for the third time. "I can't stay without a toothbrush."

"Lake of mists," murmured the girl, considering, through half-closed eyes, the mist trailing the lake and rising in wisps about the pine trees on the opposite shore.

Pretty, yes, but something more, Chase Sutherland was, as she sat looking out with her hands drooping in her lap. She was a reversion to the English gentlewoman in spite of two centuries of transplanting, in spite of the fact that she'd probably never seen England, She was English in her coloring, the clear, fresh rose of her skin and the chestnut of her hair. English, too, in her straight build; you could glimpse Lady Sutherlands before her, swinging along English lanes in rough tweeds, or sweeping past on horseback in scarlet hunting jackets. And she was English in her reticence. "Leads a quiet lifeplace run down-family exchequer low and dwindling, is the way I dope it out," Freddy, who's irresponsible as a street urchin about the English language, had announced after a talk with Chase. "The girl's retired life may have accounted for a dreaming quality, an apartness. Nat, now, notwithstanding the Hale coat of arms and the Hale heirlooms, is just plain American with his bank account and his cars and clubs," I had decided, when the latter exclaimed:

"Let's hike! Pack a lunch and go into the woods!"

"Chase, you're fagged," accused Freddy, switching suddenly in her irrelevant way. "Sleep?"

"Some. I-I dreamed."

"Same here," said Nat cheerfully.
"It wasn't a dream," she contradicted herself, a single furrow showing in her forehead. "Something woke me suddenly—some one calling. I think it was a——" She stopped short.

"Breck, were you walking in your sleep again?" demanded Freddy of me.

"It was no one here," Chase assured her. "I'm afraid you wouldn't understand. It's just a—a sort of pact I made with—some one." She hesitated. "We were to think of each other nights at a certain time."

We must have looked blank.

"Last night there was something in the way," she explained. "Sometimes it's very clear. Once it was night, with snow everywhere. He was standing in an open door with orange light behind him, and there was something in a heap at his feet. Just-a cousin, he is," she interjected, catching Nat's expression. "He carried her in-a woman-and her face was dark next to his when he stooped over her. He looked up at me steadily for a long minute—he always does just at the end. I think he married her." She shuddered convulsively. "There was something-repulsive about her."

"Just a dream, I suppose," said I.

"No. Oh, no. It's the second after I awake always."

"But you don't believe——you asked him?" questioned Nat.

"No, I can't verify them," she explained patiently, "because I've lost touch with him. But I know."

Nat pondered it.

"You had probably been thinking of your cousin," was his scientific conclusion.

"Yes."

"And the snow-it was winter!"

"It was snowing in; my bed was a snowdrift," she admitted.

"There, you see!" exclaimed Nat, triumphant.

"There have been cases, any number of cases," I said thoughtfully. "I could tell you-"

"That old grandfather Breckenridge story! I won't hear it again!" cut in Freddy, irritated by the trend of the conversation and taking it out on me.

"But my dear Frederica, it's a scien-

tific fact-" I began.

"Bother!" she ejaculated, burning her fingers in an attempt to fish the coffee spoons from a pail of scalding water.

"Let me," offered Nat, and he deftly poured off the water and dumped the

spoons into a tin.

"Why did we come, Breck?" Freddy asked abruptly, when we were left alone for a few minutes. "The place is getting on my nerves." That was an admission from Freddy. "Anyway, the butter's runny and we're almost out of bread, and I'm utterly sick of fish," she hastened to add. "If he's going to get engaged to her, why doesn't he hurry? Then we could go up to the Adirondack camp, just us-"

"Breck, you're hurting my nose, and they'll see," she sputtered against my

But there was no danger. They stood before the tent, and Nat was holding a mirror for the girl, who was going through unhurried motions of adjusting a hair net. He was laughing, teasing her, as she leaned toward him, intent upon her reflection. Then he let the mirror slip through his fingers, caught her, and kissed her. It was one of those pretty little tableaux, timed exactly, with just the right pauses. As a musical comedy hero, Nat would have been clever in the love scenes. But she simply pushed him away, and stooped, much concerned, to pick up the pieces of the mirror.

It must have been nearing noon, although there was no sun, when we struck the trail. Relieved to be clear of the underbrush, we'd followed the path for some distance, having concluded, from the tracks, that it was

merely a deer-run.

"By George, it's blazed!" announced Nat as I came up to him. And sure enough, as we looked back along our course, we found a notched tree about every fifty vards. We speculated, Nat assuring us that there wasn't a lumber camp in this region, nothing human short of the Indian reservation some thirty miles south. Thrilling to the adventure, we stopped for lunch and then pushed on. "Probably a dirty Indian who's cut loose from the others," Nat chuckled.

"But we'll see," was Freddy's practical and feminine retort, and even Chase insisted.

Freddy and I forged ahead and came to the clearing first, a log shanty beyond a stretch of red clay. A mud-colored mongrel with a long-nosed head which suggested the collie came whining from the door to meet us and to plead for something with his brown eyes. We rapped on the half-open door, waited,

then pushed in after the dog.

It was hot and so dusky that I could see nothing at first. Then I became conscious of a man moving restlessly in the bunk in the corner. Fever-flushed, delirious, he was, I discovered as I stepped closer. A chesty, middle-aged man, he looked, his straw-colored beard and hair crisped and coarsened by exposure to the sun. The muscular arm flung out against the blanket reminded me in its warm copper color of the sleek, sun-burnished bodies of some boys I'd seen swimming once, The fellow hadn't been indoors long. He began to speak with rapid incoherence:

"Planted lettuce and sweet peasnothing grows-too damned hot!" I caught.

Then to the dog that was lapping his

"Something cool, Shep-mint juleps ' with ice-

"A white throat-that's the test. God has a white throat."

Freddy and Llooked at each other.

"Here they are," came Nat's voice, and we turned to see Nat and the girl standing just inside the door.

"Curtain fell-padded, it was-and it was only the prologue," spoke the man distinctly, turning his face toward us. Nat stepped forward sharply and scrutinized him.

"By the good Lord! It's Kasper Nagel!" he gasped.

But the man was staring past Nat, his eyes clearing and concentrating upon something beyond. His words, when they came, were lucid. "Don't go yet, Chase!"

She brushed past us and stood beside him.

He lay quite still.

"You're not real," he told himself.

"We're both real," she choked. "If you were real, you'd touch me."

She put out her hand and just touched, with the tips of her fingers, his bare arm. Then, with a swift movement of abandon, she stooped and kissed his mouth, passionately, again and again. The muscular arm gripped her shoulder.

"God!" he breathed once.

"The time I carried you," he begged as she crumpled into a heap on the floor beside him. "The white place!" tore open her collar and pulled him over until his lips were against the pulse spot of her throat.

"I tried to tell you last night," he sighed with the utter content of a child in her arms. "I couldn't concentrate."

"A horrible desert in between-barren-both of us parched, drying up!" Her arms tightened convulsively about him. "Why did you do it, Kasper?"

"It would have been hell for you," he

replied: "Do you think it mattered to me what they said?"

"You thought I didn't care enough to stand anything-anything?"

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"I never doubted that," he stated sim-"That was the reason I cleared out. I've had to fight-to stay. It was wrong."

"There was-some one here," she affirmed, her voice low.

"An Indian girl."

"You married her?"

"No. She drifted in here-scared -and staved. The baby-ours"-he forced himself to make it clear to her with the effort of a man who does not dodge things-"died with her."

Chase buried her face in the rough

blanket.

"I thought I'd be sure of myselfwith ties," he explained steadily. "But it would have happened anyway, without you. There were nights when-"

In the thick silence which followed, the vision of the man stumbling through a black forest, fighting an instinct, was projected before my mind as clearly as if he had described it in words.

Nat was the first to step out of the rôle of blank spectator.

"It was you and Kasper?" he asked stupidly.

Chase lifted her head, after a time, and replied without troubling to glance at him:

"Yes."

"And he's not your cousin?"

"No." She brushed that aside negligently.

"You were going to marry him?"

"Marry him!" She turned on him. "I'll stay with him, the way she did. Anything! Can't you go, and leave us alone?" she demanded fiercely.

And then, in a single unforgetable instant, we glimpsed the charm of the Kasper Nagel Nat had colored for us. The man stirred; the look of vision and brotherhood I'd seen on the face of a great surgeon in the moment before a hig operation, darkened the blue of his eyes. With a powerful twist of his whole body, he pulled his weight on to one arm.

"Awful mess!" he jerked out, looking from Chase to Nat. "Hard—to grin!" He tossed back his head with the spirited motion of a boy, and the smile flashed white over his face, as his free arm shot out to Nat. "Shake, old chap. All right."

Silence had closed upon him and he was already slipping back to delirium as we crept out, the three of us, to sit for what seemed hours, on the step, staring across red clay at the sickly yellow patch of a garden, listening to unintelligible mutterings from within.

"If you knew him, you'd understand,"
Nat had summed him up. Nat was
right. I'd seen him and I understood
everything: why Nathan Hale had idolized him; why Chase Sutherland's wall
of reticence had fallen utterly before
him

At length, the muttering ceased and stillness settled over a gray world. After a long time, Chase came to the door.

"I think he's dead," she said passionlessly.

The rest is a nightmare. Freddy, competent in a crisis, took charge of Chase and somehow got her back to camp; the girl was tractable enough then. Nat and I found two mounds near the cabin and made another. "A bad heart can't stand fever," I said once.

Night was falling when we stumbled into camp with the dog at our heels. Nat had spoken just twice on the way. "Kasper and Chase," he said once, "I've got to get that straight." The blood from his cheek, torn by the brush, was dripping on to his soft collar. And later, "Clearing out was the hardest thing for him; it was his grin."

We broke up camp the next day and started back, adding the dog, which we hadn't the heart to leave behind, to our load. It was the last night out, the one before we made the little mining town, that I stepped from the tent and heard Nat say:

"I felt that way about him, too." There was a pause in which I distinguished two figures standing on a ridge beyond me. "We've had that experience, both of us," he continued, half pleading, his voice beautifully modulated.

A moment passed.

"Yes, I'll marry you," Chase Sutherland replied with quiet decision.

I waited, I admit it, to see whether he would touch her. He didn't. They simply stood there silently, side by side. As perfect a thing as Nat had ever done, perfect in its restraint, it proved, beyond all question, his feeling for the fitness of things.

But how to account for the girl? And then the words came to me:

"Those whopping good sports who lose and grin!"

Was this her grin?



THE MASK

WHEN thou art near, thy beauty blinds mine eyes.
When thou art far, my vision vainly tries
To see what never has or will be seen,
Because thy beauty is thy beauty's screen.
LOUISE HEALD.



Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—Ballad of Dead Ladies.

SHE was a Servian peasant girl, daughter of a shrewd old hill man who made a tidy bit of money on shady cattle deals. Her name was Draga Lunjewitza, and her face was as glorious as her name was hideous. Her only assets, at the start, were this same face and a figure to match, a meteoric ambition, a charming lack of scruples and of morality, and more than her peasant quota of wit.

Little Draga, watching her father's steady rise, gazed far ahead into the future. With narrowed eyes she planned to leap barriers which seemed insurmountable by any one except a fairy-book princess. Deliberately she made up her mind to use her budding beauty and her super-woman lure as seven-leagued boots to stride along the road to success.

Yet even Draga herself little dreamed that that same road led to a throne—and to the eventual smash of a dynasty. Least of all did she have any slightest warning of the horrible death which awaited her at the very end of the broad, glittering road she chose for herself.

Long before bolshevism was ever heard of, it was comparatively easy for peasants in Draga's country to turn

More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

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Draga Lunjewitza:

The Servian Siren

things upside down and to scale dizzy

Draga had sense enough to know that a good education was the first step toward success, so she became a star pupil at the best young ladies' school in Belgrade. Her studies did not prevent her from having numerous exciting love affairs, however.

From the first she was irresistible to men, and she knew it. It was not part of her plan to fall in love yet; but she reasoned that "practice makes perfect." Therefore, she practiced with great skill on the hearts of her lovers, perfecting her technique for the important days to come.

Her parents found the young superwoman a handful, so they determined to get rid of her by arranging a marriage as soon as she was out of school. There was no difficulty in finding suitors for her shapely hand. The whole trouble lay in persuading Draga to make a choice from among the many clamorous wooers who were thrusting at her their offers of hand and heart.

Finally, Svetozar Maschin, a mining engineer who seemed to have a future, was picked out of the crowd. It was an unwise choice. Maschin was crazily in love with Draga, but he was a drunk-ard. He disgusted her. They led a catand-dog life together. Maschin was wildly jealous of every one who came near his wife, and Draga in her turn

took care to liven things up whenever she could by giving him plenty of cause for jealousy.

This miserable state of things went on for two years. Then Maschin died. He is said to have killed himself. Super-women's husbands frequently do, you will notice.

Draga paused for breath before her next plunge forward. During the period of her mourning she lived very quietly at home with her mother and brothers and sisters. Maschin had not left her much money, so she tried literary work for a while. She translated stories for the newspapers, and did whatever other writing came her way. Later, she said of this period: "I am not ashamed of having been once a poor woman and having tried to help myself by literary work." Which is rather quaint of her, considering that it is probably the only respectable calling she ever followed in all her life!

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But Draga was not destined to shine as a writer. Stories of her beauty and wonderful fascination were always floating farther and farther abroad. Finally they reached the ears of handsome Baron Cambroy of the Guards. He contrived to meet Draga. The attraction was mutual. Cambroy was tall, slender, and dark—the most interesting man Draga had yet met. He was a stepping-stone to a bigger life, so she threw herself into the intrigue with might and main.

Before long, King Milan of Servia heard of it. He decided to take a look at this Draga whom every one called so glorious. It needed scarcely more than that one look to bring the king to Draga's feet in babbling eagerness. He had fallen so violently in love with her that he determined to have her near him always. With questionable taste he ordered his wife, Nataline, to make her a lady-in-waiting.

Natalie had no choice but to do as she was told. This was in 1891. Draga

took up her residence at the Servian court. Here she queened it over the other ladies-in-waiting, and with the skill of a sorceress the cattleman's daughter waved her enchanted wand over the Servian noblemen and the foreign diplomats who came to the court.

May I tell you a little about the royal family who ruled that court? It will only take a moment.

In olden days a swineherd named Karageorge-Black George-had torn Servia loose from Turkey. Later, he was murdered by another peasant named Obren, who grabbed the throne and all that went with it. Then along came a descendant of Karageorge. who wrenched the throne from Obrenovitch, a descendant of Obren. Then, in due time, the wheel of fortune swung around once more, with an Obrenovitch on This particular Obrenovitch was top. Milan.

Being a king in Servia carried a salary of two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars a year. Milan felt that he could afford to marry whomsoever he chose, so he chose Natalie Keshko, the daughter of a Russian colonel.

This brings us back to Draga.

When she took her place as maid of honor to the queen, she found the Servian court alive with political plots. There were spies in the service of the king, spies in the employ of the queen—spies in the service of Russia, of Austria, of Germany. Belgrade was a spy paradise.

Draga played a safe middle course, one which was unscrupulous, but which could not very well fail; she became a spy for both king and queen. As a cloak for her dual rôle, she assumed a modest and innocent pose which cleverly threw the plotters off their guard and made her especially valuable to her employers. When Natalie took her to the Spanish court, for instance, she won the admiration and "sympathy" of the whole royal family. Even Natalie her-

self seems to have been fooled by the subtle lady-in-waiting; for she said jeeringly:

"You persist in waiting till a wonderful fairy prince comes along!" And

again she exclaimed:

"Don't expect any one to come and play the mandolin under your window!"

It pleased Draga, at this time, to turn a cold shoulder to the French and Spanish noblemen who paid court to her. But her motives were quite other than those Natalie imputed to her. She was merely waiting for higher game.

In the meantime, even court life had its drawbacks for Draga. Natalie was not easy to live with. She was very ambitious, selfish, and heartless. She insisted that Draga tear up all petitions for charity before they could reach the queen, and tell her nothing about them.

Draga was rather delicate, and she found it bitter drudgery to keep pace with Natalie on their daily, interminable walks. Nevertheless, with the end of the road always in view, Draga continued to trudge about with the queen, and to win fresh laurels as spy extraordi-

nary.

Finally, her tale-bearing caused a more than usually severe quarrel between the royal pair. As an indirect sequel to this, the Servians, tired of Milan's misrule, kicked him off the throne. In this connection, there is a remark of Milan's that is rather well worth repeating. When his friends tried to condole with him about his abdication, he smiled a bit crookedly, and said:

"Don't you think having been a king is always rather a pleasant memory?"

As for Draga, memories played no part in her scheme of life. At the same moment that Milan lost his throne, he lost her. She had no time to bother with an ex-king, though he was more hopelessly in love with her than ever. Without loss of time, she turned her enchantments on the crown prince, lit-

tle Alexander—Sascha, as he was called—who, mere boy that he was, stood no chance at all against the lure of wily and experienced Draga. Though she was twice his age, she had utterly enslaved him by the time he was fifteen. To him she was all the more alluring because of her full-blown beauty.

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Alexander himself was anything but alluring. He had the look of a degenerate, with malformed ears, shifty eyes, and a lumpily unsymmetrical face. And his character was as unpleasant as his looks. He loved to incite his soldiers to fight duels for his amusement; cruel sport always relieved the dullness of

life in general for him.

At first, Natalie laughed at the affair. She did not take it seriously. She even helped matters on, unknowingly, by ordering Draga to write a letter to Alexander, commanding his instant presence at his mother's side. He was at Karslbad at the time, and Natalie did not approve of the reports which came to her from there. Draga's letter brought Alexander to her on the run.

That was the beginning. The rest

was easy-for Draga.

One day Alexander was swimming. He was a poor swimmer, and nearly drowned. His swimming teacher lost his own life in saving Alexander's. Draga, from all acounts, nearly died, too, of anxiety. When Alexander was at last safe on dry land, the lady-in-waiting trembled and shed tears of joy.

"Thank God you are still living!"

she cried fervently.

This was too much for the youth. Speechless, he took Draga in his arms and kissed her. As I said, it was all very easy—for Draga. The intrigue went on right under Natalie's nose for quite a while, till a colonel on Alexander's staff—Draga, you see, was not the only spy at court—blabbed the whole story to the boy's mother.

When she waked up to what was go-

ing on, she flew into a royal rage and ordered Draga to leave the court at once. Draga obeyed. She left—and with her left Alexander. In the end it was Natalie who was banished, not her lady-in-waiting.

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Draga was not as beautiful as she had been; her determined ambition had left its marks on her face. Also, she was no longer in her first youth. But her super-woman charm was not dependent upon beauty alone. She was more powerful than ever, and could hold her own against youth and beauty, in spite of the whole of feminine Servia. She ruled as uncrowned queen. Alexander was as wax in her fingers. taught him to increase his bank account unbelievably, by taxing everything in sight-from pigs, "because they rooted on government land," to produce of all sorts which went in or out of the coun-

A cordon of gendarmes was placed around every village to collect duty on every conceivable thing. Incidentally, Draga feathered her own nest very comfortably. Through her Paris broker, she bought gilt-edged American stocks, and became rich in her own right.

"She was the canniest woman who ever exploited a straight-front corset," some one said of her.

Draga rushed the adoring Alexander along at a riotous pace, until, in 1896, the Servian government suddenly realized that a cattle dealer's daughter was leading it around by the nose. Hastily, a decision was made to marry Alexander to some princess or other, and stop the Draga supremacy then and there. But no princess could be found who wanted him! Even the democratic Louise of Tuscany, afterward Princess Louise of Saxony, wrote of Alexander in her highly spiced diary:

"Finally there was talk of marrying me to King Alexander of Servia, six years younger than I! Queen Natalie, who a few days ago celebrated one of her several reunions with ex-King Milan, spoke feelingly of her son to mother, lauding him as the best of sons and the most promising of sovereigns; but the oft-divorced majesty was less communicative when mother asked how many millions she would pass over to Alexander on his marriage day. That settled 'Sascha's' ambitions as far as my hand was concerned.

"Marry a Balkan king, and the née Keshko holding the purse strings! Not for my father's daughter! I didn't want to marry into a Russian colonel's family, anyhow. I believe Queen Natalie's father was a colonel, or was he only a lieutenant colonel?"

Royalty failing poor Alexander, the court next tried to find a rich wife for him among American millionaires' daughters,

But, about this time, Draga decided it was time to put a stop to all these plans for her overthrow. So she played her cleverest card. Before long it began to be whisperd about, "unofficially," that a left-handed heir to the Servian throne was imminent. A physician from Paris made an affidavit to that effect.

Belgrade was in an uproar. Half the people declared the heir must be made legitimate! "Alexander and Draga must be married!" The other half were ready to murder the wily widow.

King Alexander himself was completely fooled, and most inanely delighted. He announced triumphantly that the wedding should take place at once.

Draga did the one thing needful to clinch her victory. She told Alexander he must not jeopardize his future by marrying her. She fled to her sister's, refusing to listen to the young king's frantic pleas. Her sister, by the way, always claimed that Draga was sincere in the matter, and that she talked of leaving the country forever. Form your own conclusions.

Alexander followed Draga to her hiding place. After a stormy interview with her, during which Draga was tearful, but firm in her resolve of self-banishment, Alexander declared recklessly:

"Then I'll leave Servia, too! I'll give up the crown and follow you! Without you, I cannot be happy. I want you to be my wife before God and man!"

The next day, while Draga was still holding firmly to her resolve, a deputation waited on her. It included Servia's home minister and the minister of public works. They demanded that she leave the country and cross over into Hungary without more delay.

"What have I done?" she queried proudly. But the officials would not

discuss it, and packed her off.

She went as far as her aunt's home, whispering her intended whereabouts to her brother, Nicodemus. A few minutes after she had gone, the king burst in, having nearly killed his best horse to get there. When he found that the bird had already flown, he sent Nicodemus after her on the run.

Needless to say, Draga returned. As the king took her in his arms, he slipped ar engagement ring on her finger.

When ex-King Milan heard the news, he hurried to Servia, hoping to prevent the marriage. But Alexander was taking no chances. He had his father stopped at the frontier.

And so Draga became Queen of Servia. She had traveled far. She was at the highest and broadest point in the glittering road which she had chosen

for her own.

In due time, Queen Draga disappeared from Belgrade and returned, holding in her arms a baby. As she rode through the crowded streets she held the infant aloft so every one could see him. When she reached the palace, she appeared on the balcony with the baby, crying:

"Behold the future King of Servia!"

Some people believed it was her child. More did not. Finally, an editor, with a keen nose for news, tracked down the real parents of the child, and revealed the fact that the "future King of Servia" was only a property baby, after all.

Draga, in a fury, threatened to have the editor banished. Meanwhile Belgrade laughed itself sick over the hoax, and Alexander was speechless with

rage.

Before long the glamour of the situation began to wear off. The couple took to quarreling horribly. Once Alexander struck his wife in the presence of the court, and she tried to take poison, to avenge herself for this; but with her usual cleverness, she let herself be prevented from actual death, and there was the usual reconciliation. In the next quarrel she boxed Alexander's ill-shapen ears. All this worked like poison in the veins of the Servians. They resolved to free the court of the vice-ridden king and his peasant wife.

A plot was formed among the army officers to put Peter Karageorgeovitch on the throne, and to rid Servia of the precious Obrenovitch pair, at one

and the same time.

On the night of June II, 1903, soldiers broke into the royal hedchamber. The leaders ordered Alexander to send his wife into exile. And then the degenerate king did the one kingly act of his rotten life. To his everlasting honor, Alexander refused to part from Draga. Clasping his super-woman in his trembling arms, he kissed her. So standing, he turned to face death.

The assassins fired. Draga, and the man whose pitiful life she had wrecked, fell to the floor, riddled with bullets.

Seldom has a super-woman paid her debt in so complete and dramatic a fashion!



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Sixty-one Seconds to Train Time

By Richard Connell
Author of "Mr. Braddy's Bottle."

VERY Friday afternoon for eight years, at precisely seventeen minutes past one, Purdy Timmins hopped gingerly from a New York Central train in the Buffalo station, and with brisk step headed for Main Street. He stopped for sixteen minutes at the Mary Catharine Ann Cafeteria where he invariably had a lunch of tuna-fish salad and rice pudding. Then he proceeded, on a bee line, to the Buffalo branch, of Biedermeister's Ocean-to-Ocean Delicatessen Stores to receive and examine the weekly report of the local manager. For Purdy was traveling auditor for the Ocean-to-Ocean Delicatessen Stores.

Also, Purdy was-

Well, have you and Gwendolyn or Patricia or whoever she is ever sat in Central Park or Prospect Park or wherever it is you sit, and spent a merry hour speculating as to the occupations and habits of the variegated stream of passers-by? You have? An innocent, but exasperating game, is it not? You never know whether you are right. But then your victims never know what your estimate of them has been. That prosperous lawyer, for example, little wots that you have set him down as a necktie salesman in Crooks Brothers.

But about Purdy Timmins you would make no mistake. The minute he rubber-heeled past your bench, with his trim blue serge suit worn slightly shiny at the elbows, with his common-sense shoes, his sedate straw hat, his slight stoop, and the mathematical look in his rather pale-blue eyes, you would have said without hesitation: "There goes a figurer. Probably a high-grade bookkeeper."

If you took the trouble to characterize him further, he might have suggested to you a Belgian hare, or some other worthy, kind-hearted, but unaggressive animal. But little would you or Gwendolyn or Patricia or whoever she is, have suspected that under the third button of the blue serge suit—a bit to the left if you insist on accuracy—beat a heart as stout for adventure, romance, and deeds of daring as ever beat, throbbed, and pumped in the pages of chivalric literature. Purdy Timmins was utterly, incurably romantic. However—

Here comes the sad music. Romance and adventure in Purdy were confined entirely to dreams. He was not a doer. His sole activity in life was in the unromantic field of dill pickles, Swiss cheese, pickled beets, and other Biedermeisterian products. He knew personally every stuffed olive in all the hundred or more Ocean-to-Ocean Delicatessen Stores. He could have told you off-hand, if roused suddenly in the middle of the night, exactly how many scoops of baked beans were on hand in the Utica store.

But, as for venturing down the Broad Highway, Purdy, frankly, was too timid. In his dreams he was Ivanhoe, the Three Musketeers, Sherlock Holmes, Sir Nigel, and Tarzan of the Apes. In his waking moments he was a meek counter of pickles. Ah, life!

It was his hesitancy, his fatal lack of

decision which caused Purdy Timmins the only really poignant sorrow of the thirty-four years of his life, a life given over for the most part to decimal points and dreams. Three years before he had fallen very thoroughly in love with Miss Pearl O'Grady, cashier in the Pough-keepsie branch of Beidermeister's. Pearl was blond, petite, and had a soul above potato salad and turkey sandwiches with real French mayonnaise.

Purdy, the romantic, worshiped her. He helped her install a system in her little cage which made her work much simpler and easier, on the pretense that it was part of his job to do so. He took her for a number of walks in the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery on Sunday afternoons, a favorite place for lovers. For Christmas he sent her a limp-leather copy of "In Tune with the Infinite." He talked to her fascinatingly about elbow macaroni, shredded codfish, salami, and other topics of the day in the delicatessen set, but that fatal timidity kept him from speaking of what was nearest his heart. And vet he could not help but know that Miss O'Grady liked him.

Then, one doleful day, Pearl O'Grady told him that she was leaving.

"I'm going West," she said with averted eyes.

He was too stunned to ask her where. At the time it struck him that she must mean Oklahoma. He didn't know why.

"I—we—that is, the company will miss you, I'm sure, Miss Pearl," was all he could say.

Then he had to rush off to count the olives in the Newburgh store. He had a half formulated plan to come back to Poughkeepsie the next evening, and then, amid the sympathetic granite and marble of the Rural Cemetery, speak of other things than onions and anchovies. He would ask her to become Mrs. T., and to fly to Brooklyn with him—it was there, in a boarding house

with a hard face of brownstone that Purdy Timmins made his headquarters

But he procrastinated. He put it off a day. Then two. And when he did get to Poughkeepsie, Pearl was gone. Vanished. And no one could tell him whither. And so, for three years now, Purdy's heart had given a little skip every time he saw a petite blonde. But he never found Pearl.

So much for his past. Now for his present. We left him counting hams and tongues in the Buffalo store. By five in the afternoon his task was completed and his report set down neatly in his book. His next stop was Albany, and he could not get a train for that point until one minute past six. So, every Friday of his life, he had just sixty-one minutes to kill before train time.

That sixty-one minutes always irked Purdy exceedingly. He was a methodical person who scheduled his day from toothbrushing to toothbrushing with care. And, what is more, he followed the schedule. But what can one do with one little hour and one little minute—in Buffalo? Have you ever tried it? Since the amendment, I mean.

Purdy hit upon a regimen. Why seek adventure in Buffalo? What could possibly happen there? Thus reasoned Purdy, the dreamer. So, each Friday, he left the Ocean-to-Ocean Delicatessen Store promptly at five, walked with unhesitating step down Main Street, and then over Exchange to the railroad sta-This took eleven minutes. He then had his shoes shined, whether they needed it or not. This took until fivetwenty. Repairing to the smoking room, he smoked his one cigar of the day, a small, mild one, and glanced through an evening paper, lamenting the absence of an "Advice to the Love Torn" col-That took till five-thirty-one. Then he walked to the oyster bar and devoured half a dozen raw Blue Points. Not because he was hungry; he would dine on the train-on his company. But it was an excellent way to kill twenty minutes, or so.

Every Friday he exchanged the same badinage with the waiter.

"Half a dozen Blue Points on the

half, and see that one of them has a pearl in it."

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It gave him, somehow, a melancholy pleasure to say this. Just to mention the word "pearl" conjured up tender scenes in the cemetery. He wondered, as romanticists do, if the stolid Greek who waited on him could guess that under those words of levity was a deep, deep significance; that a secret sorrow was gnawing at his heart. But the waiter, apparently, was a realist. served the oysters in a bored, perfunctory way.

Having eaten the Blue Points with a grave deliberateness, and having found no pearl, Purdy had just a few minutes to get aboard the train for Albany, and take out of his brief case a well-thumbed volume of Dumas. As he was whisked along he would sit with half-closed eves and cross swords with D'Artagnan or break a lance with Sir Nigel, then arouse himself with a sigh and gaze at the whirling landscape with a "nothingever-happens-to-me" look in his paleblue eves.

Thus, through years of pickle counting, Buffalo came to stand for Boredom in the lexicon of Purdy Timmins. And, Friday after Friday, he spent his sixtyone minutes till train time in the same, scheduled way.

But one Friday-

As he left the Buffalo store at five o'clock, an inward something prompted him to walk to the station more slowly, to look about the streets for something which might redeem Buffalo from utter grayness in his mind. A dog fight, perhaps. Or a fire.

He yielded, after a moment, to the inward prompting.

As he walked down Main Street, a

trim girl with very blond hair crossed in front of him with a hurrying step. Pearl? Purdy stared at her hard. The girl flashed at him a small, quick smile. Then she walked rapidly down a side

Purdy stopped short. Here was the finger of adventure beckoning to him. The girl-wasn't Pearl, probably-but she might be. His near-sighted eyes, accustomed to Arabic figures, could not be sure about hers. Should he take up the challenge? Should he follow? He had a full hour to train time. Should he? He had never done anything of the sort in his life-but he had dreamed of it. And here was his chance. He hesitated on the street corner. All sorts of possibilities flashed back and forth through his brain. And then-

He followed the girl. Her quick steps led him through side streets, and he was perhaps a hundred feet behind her when she disappeared into a large hotel. Purdy followed. But some one was trying to get in the revolving door at the same time and his progress was impeded for a full two seconds. When he did. enter the lobby the blond girl had vanished completely.

Purdy, with a sigh, sat down in a spacious leather chair, a little breathless from his adventure. His first thought, had he phrased it, would have been "Stung!" or "I knew nothing could happen to me in Buffalo!" He was about to make his way to the station. He still had time for his oysters.

A large, aggressively well-dressed man hurried into the lobby and swept it with a searching, anxious eye. Purdy He was just then under the spell of Conan Doyle, and it occurred to him that here was a chance to try a little deduction. He watched the big man.

Then he decided:

That the big man was looking for some one.

That he was looking for a man,

as he paid no attention to the women in the lobby.

C. That he did not know the man by sight, and expected to recognize him by something he wore—perhaps the emblem of a fraternal order, for his gaze seemed to rest on the lapel of each man's coat.

Purdy looked at the big man's lapel. There was a brilliant splotch of red there—a crimson geranium.

Evidently the man's quarry was not in the lobby, for he vanished into the grillroom where there lay in state the corpse of what had once been a gay and busy bar.

"Hope he finds him there," said Purdy to himself, puffing on his daily near cigar. He decided to finish the cigar before going to the station. He watched the eddying figures in the lobby, and listened to the hum of many voices and the strident bellow of the bell hops paging "Mr. Grumitch, Mr. Blaw, Mr. Grumitch."

His eyes strayed to the street door. A dapper, youngish man in a black suit with a fine white stripe, entered, shot a keen, hasty glance through the lobby, and then sat down on a divan a few feet from the watching Purdy. In his buttonhole was a vivid crimson geranium. He whipped out a costly watch, as thin as a soda cracker, and Purdy pulled out his own nickel-plated one. It was eleven minutes past five.

Purdy studied the man, who was not in a position to notice his scrutiny. He had a hard, competent face. His very meager-brimmed straw hat, and the small diamond horseshoe pin in his narrow, black knit tie suggested race tracks to Purdy, or, to be exact, stories about race tracks. The man was evidently looking for some one—and he was nervous.

The big man with the geranium reappeared from the grillroom. He looked about the lobby, and his eye fell on the red flower in the buttonhole of Mr. Racetrack, as Purdy had mentally named him. With quick strides the hig man crossed the lobby and stood before the younger man. Purdy cocked a curious ear in their direction.

"Security?" said the first man, a question in his tone.

"Liberty," snapped the second man,

"Right," said the first man. And, whispering together in such low tones that the eager Purdy could not hear, they left the hotel.

Once more adventure beckoned. Should he follow? Purdy, having made one decision, was in the mood for making another. He followed them. It was only five-fourteen. He might strike real adventure in this town, after all, in the forty-seven minutes left to train time.

The two red-geranium men crossed the street to another and smaller hotel. In the lobby a short, fat man with a pink silk shirt, was waiting. There was a red geranium in his buttonhole. Purdy managed to brush past as the two men greeted the third.

"Security?" he heard the big man

"Liberty," snapped the short, fat man, shortly and fatly.

"Right," said the first man.

The trio went out of the hotel by a side door. Purdy followed. His blood was tingling. A block away, a well-fed man in a suit of Shantung silk leaned pensively against the window of a cigar store. In his buttonhole was a crimson geranium.

The three men approached him. They spoke to him briefly. Purdy saw that he answered with a single word, and joined them.

The spirit of Don Quixote came careening down through the ages and hopped pell-mell into the brain of Purdy Timmins. He had acted. He would act. He was agog about the mystery of those important-looking men and their blood-red flowers. He would get

to the bottom of this crimson geranium business even if he got a swift kick for his curiosity. Probably it was some lodge or something. Maybe a drinking club. The men took it seriously, whatever it was. Anyway, he would find out. Yes, by George, even if he had to take a later train!

The four geranium wearers were turning into the first hotel. Purdy darted in at another door, rushed into the flower shop, threw down a dollar, seized a potted geranium, broke off its crimson flower, stuck it into his buttonhole, and sat down in the lobby, trying not to let his teeth chatter.

The quartet entered. They spied the geranium. They approached Purdy.

"Security," said the big man.
"L-Liberty," said Purdy Timmins.

"Right," said the big man. "Now let's beat it. The car's outside." He looked at his watch. "Five-twenty-five." he said.

Purdy went out with them. His eyes were shining. A large gray touring car with an expensive hyphenated name was drawn up at the curb, and Purdy noted with a little spine tickle that the squat, oriental-looking chauffeur also wore a red geranium in his buttonhole.

The car shot through a tangle of streets, crossed railroad tracks, and was soon in the poorest section of the city. Suddenly it darted down the ghost of an alley and came to a stop before a dirty, dilapidated brick house, with windowpanes broken and with every evidence of being uninhabited. The men got out quickly and the car shot away.

Purdy, with amazed eyes, saw the big man kick twice, then three times at the slanting cellar door.

"Security?" rasped a harsh voice. "Liberty," said the big man.

The cellar door swung open. The men went down the steps. Purdy noticed that the door was lined with a plate of steel, and that it closed with a clang.

What Purdy saw in the cellar made his eyes pop out. It was the most remarkable cellar he had ever seen, heard, read, or dreamed of. A thick red carpet covered the floor. It was furnished with a lavish luxury. Tapestries hung on the walls. Subdued light from a dozen rich electric lights with manyhued shades illumined the room. A half dozen men, who, from their clothes, might have been bankers or brokers, sat about a long refectory table in earnest conversation.

A thin, big-nosed old man sat at the head of the table, evidently presiding.

"Sit down, gentlemen, and let's get to business," he said in a purring voice. Purdy and his companions took seats at the table.

"The first thing I'm going to tell you," said the old man, "is that beginning next week, our quota is going to be a million a day."

A million? A million what? Purdy wondered.

"We have been doing well, on the whole," the old man continued, "although Chicago and St. Louis have fallen below their quotas. They'll have to buck up. Boston, however, I'm glad to say, has come through at last. Mr. Scheer was just making his report when you came in. Perhaps he'll be kind enough to repeat it for the benefit of the late comers."

Mr. Scheer, a lean, studious-looking young man, with bone glasses, rose, took a puff at a blue cigarette holder half a foot long, and said:

"We hit three hundred and fifty thousand last week, which isn't so bad for little Boston, eh, what?"

Purdy's companions made murmurs of applause.

"We are working a new wrinkle up there," Mr. Scheer went on, "which some of you fellows may be able to use. We get some respectable old codger to start a bona-fide employment agency, to supply banks, *rust companies, bond houses, and so on, with high-grade employees. Then, in a month or two, with the aid of forged references, he is able to place a couple of our men in a bond house, let's say. The rest is too easy. Last Tuesday one of the men placed like that was sent to the bank with sixty thousand in Liberty Bonds. Here they are."

Mr. Scheer of Boston waved his hand nonchalantly toward a table behind him. Purdy Timmins, with a gasp, saw that it was piled three feet high with Liberty and other bonds.

Then Purdy knew what his companions of the red geranium were.

"Now let's hear the reports from the others," said the old man at the head of the table. "Seattle, speak up."

The youngish man, whom Purdy had dubbed Mr. Racetrack, arose. Purdy felt a dryness in his throat and a numbness in his legs.

What should he say when his turn

Mr. Racetrack said that things were going as well as could be expected in Seattle. True, he and his assistants had only got away with thirty-two thousand in the past week, but it was a new territory, and his organization was not perfected yet. He needed a good, dependable, strong-armed man. Could any of the members oblige and loan him one? Good! Chicago could. Well, next meeting he hoped to be able to report a coup.

"Now, New Orleans," said the old

The well-fed man in the Shantung silk suit made his report.

"Well, Joe, how's tricks in Pittsburgh?" said the old man to the big man, the first geranium wearer Purdy had seen.

"Two hundred and thirty thou," said the big man briefly. "Expect a killing next week."

Purdy Timmins found his breath coming harder. He looked around at

the ring of faces. What would men like that do when they found he was an outsider? His blood turned to ice water.

"Cincinnati," said the old man.

The short, fat man rose to make his report. Purdy was the only one left. In a minute he, too, must stand before those hard-faced men. And then-

Two raps, a pause, then three raps at the steel door.

"Must be Max. He's put the car up, Let him in, will you, Harry?" said the old man.

A desperate fear spurred Purdy Timmins to action. He slid from his seat. The gang, interested in the report from Cincinnati, did not notice. He followed the bulky figure of Harry to the door. As it swung open to admit the squat chauffeur, Purdy, like a jack rabbit, slipped out into the gathering gloom, and ran. How he ran! Had a legion of fiends been snapping at his heels he could not have gone faster. Out of the alley he tore, and then down the street. Whither, he knew not. Away, that was all. Blindly, breathlessly he dashed on until bang! he collided with a large, soft object.

"Oof!" said the object, Then, "Wotda hell-

It was a cop.

In a torrent of excited words, Purdy Timmins told his story. The precinct station house was just around the corner, it seemed.

In three minutes a clanging patrol was racing through the streets, jammed with blue-coated men with bulging hip pockets.

In two minutes a cellarful of crooks and a load of bonds had been captured.

In five minutes they were all back in the station house, and Purdy, hero, was telling his story to the police lieutenant and the reporters.

"It's a lucky day for you, me lad!" said the lieutenant. "That's the most dangerous gang in the country! The bankers have offered a reward of fifty thousand dollars for them. Did you say your address was 5- Joralemon Street, Brooklyn? You'll be getting a nice, fat check before long."

Purdy looked at the station-house

clock. Ten minutes to six.

"I gotta go," he said huskily. "Gotta make the six-one to Albany.

He reached the railroad station just in time to swing aboard the last car.

Now that is what would have happened if he had followed the girl who smiled at him on Main Street. he didn't follow her. Remember, I told you he was a dreamer-not a doer. So he decided not to follow her; and so he never went to the hotel, and never saw the red geranium gang, which may, for all I know, be still stealing bonds. No, instead of following the trail of adventure, Purdy Timmins did as he had always done every Friday for the past eight years.

He walked straight down Main Street, over Exchange, and into the railroad station. This took eleven minutes. Then he had his shoes shined, which took till five-twenty. He smoked his one cigara small, mild one-and glanced through

thirty.

Then he walked to the oyster bar for his half dozen oysters-not because he was hungry, but because it would help

He exchanged the time-honored pleasantry with the unsympathetic oyster-

"Half a dozen Blue Points on the half, and see that one of them has a pearl in it."

While the oysterman was busy prying open the oysters, Purdy mused sad musings about the tender scenes and words which Pearl and he might have indulged in in the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery.

The oysters appeared, and he slowly dabbed them with horse-radish and

squirted lemon juice, humanely, in their eyes, so that they might not see their fate. He ate them, one by one, with gravity. Five disappeared. He had left the largest till last. He inserted it in his mouth. He closed his teeth. There was a loud "Cr-r-r-unch," and a pain shot through Purdy's head as if he had tried to bite a handful of wasps charged with electricity.

The pearl, at last? He made a quick examination. The first object was undoubtedly ivory, and by feeling as well as by sight, Purdy judged that it was part of his tooth. And the other object was, beyond any doubt, a piece of oyster shell. Purdy groaned. He would gladly have sacrificed a tooth to find a pearl, but a piece of oyster shell-

The oysterman was all sympathy now. "Too bad, boss, too bad!" he said. "Them accidents can't be helped, though."

Purdy held his hand to his aching

"Yup," said the oysterman, "Even oysters ain't what they used to be!"

He plucked Purdy by the coat sleeve and said in the tone of one imparting a secret:

"Say, I tell you what you'd better an evening paper. That took till five- do. Right across the street, in the Terminal Building, is a swell dentist. Doctor Basset. He keeps open till six. You can just make it. He'll fix you up. Just tell him that Jake, over at the oyster counter, sent you."

The suffering Purdy, mumbling something about suing somebody, acted on this advice.

Oh, why hadn't he followed that girl? Doctor Basset proved to be old, fat, and fatherly. He had a perpetual jovial garrulity, found only among dentists and undertakers. And some barbers.

"Now that's a shame," he said, gazing at the place where the tooth had been.

"And I'll bet you thought it was a pearl, too."

"I did," said Purdy dismally.
"Well," said Doctor Basset judiciously, as he applied a soothing substance to Purdy's jaw, "Buffalo is a

stance to Purdy's jaw, "Buffalo is a mighty poor place to find pearls. The only pearl I ever found here was my

secretary. Give her your name and address, will you, so I can send you a bill?"

He raised his voice and called into an inner room, "Oh, come in here a moment, will you, Miss O'Grady?"



THE PANTOUM PLAINTIVE

AH, this the poet's fate, To toil with halting pen! This pantoum I create; And then I strive again

To toil with halting pen, Seeking an errant rhyme; And then I strive again With fallacies of time.

Seeking an errant rhyme The weary hours I spend; With fallacies of time I struggle to no end.

The weary hours I spend
In this industrious day;
I struggle to no end,
The editor will say:

"In this industrious day
The Muses' charms are fled."
The editor will say:
"Of course, it won't be read;

"The Muses' charms are fled
In this material age;
Of course, it won't be read,
But fills this half-void page."

In this material age
This pantoum I create
But fills this half-void page.
Ah, this the poet's fate!
M. B. STEPHENSON.



Weg

By Violet Irwin



CHAPTER I.

EVERYTHING appears as it ought to appear, yet nothing really is what it seems."

So Letitia Rothwell silently noted as she fluttered into the rectory dining room and took her accustomed place at her brother's breakfast table. She was forty-five and looked nearer sixty. Her mouse-colored hair, parted and drawn smoothly back, added at least ten to the unkind friction of her years. Her mouse-colored frock, tight about the hips and ample at the feet, contributed its bit.

We do not suggest that her maiden mind consciously harbored impressions succinct and philosophic. Aunt Letitia did not express herself to herself epigrammatically; she had been educated neither to think, to reason, nor to form opinions, but brought up with a single eye on the great career of matrimony, and taught to mark time gracefully till such event issued sealed orders, even should the drill last half a century.

The fact is, Letitia hardly expressed herself to herself at all. Her mental processes vaporized into feeling, and left it at that. She had felt her way to Twiller-Twisters, her single great coup. As far back as the autumn of 1914 she commenced to feel "those poor boys'" needs; and, as the years changed, worried ceaselessly. She wept

in bed over them, her chilblained toes crying of trench feet by night, and her neat darning basket insisting daily on their massed helplessness. Thus the invention of Twiller-Twisters, those soleless, footless socks, which, by being shifted around an inch every time you change your boots, preserve to themselves as many lives as the proverbial cat, was wholly a matter of feeling. That government adoption of the same turned aunt Letitia from an aging, penniless spinster relative into a personality, is a mere financial outcome. Heart and feeling were and always would be the mainsprings of her life.

Her brother grunted good morning, her niece smiled; and as the spinster's bright eyes reconnoitered from the back of the colonel's paper to the colonel's elder daughter, she felt duplicity in the very air—Pretense with a big P. The thing had got her, had got them all—or they had caught it. Largely and vaguely she mistrusted this miasma from the ruins of war. Certainly no corner of the world could be more malignantly afflicted than the rectory.

In the first place, it was not a rectory proper, but only a second dwelling on the Lawlor estate, built near the church, which succeeding generations of younger sons had occupied while using the family living as a stepping-stone. Three dignitaries in gaiters had clothed

past Lawlordom with ponderous superiority, but their fortunes thinning with their brains and blood, old General George, the present crusty head, was glad enough to rent his house to his friend Rothwell, though he made an obligation of it under the housing act, just as the gallant colonel, in his turn, paid the rent with a jocular air and his sister's check.

When Letitia fluttered and jingled to her brother's board it was, in fact, to a table of her own providing—but unacknowledged.

The colonel himself, for all his military bearing, took vengeance out in bluster, aimed nothing more destructive than a golf ball, and was accustomed to speak of the Allies and the enemy in terms of "up" and "down." He was a product of the old school, and proud of it, as he frequently observed.

His daughter, Roselle, on the other hand, clad in the scant simplicity of Paris, with a skirt hardly below her knees and sleeves above her elbows, smoking a Turkish cigarette in an ivory holder six inches long, looked the personification of our twentieth century. Her limpid blue eyes lingered on the respectful back of the man, Draper, operating at the buffet, a butler of the old school. Her words crystallized her aunt's thought.

"Fancy having one's breakfast served by the greengrocer! The idea is positively too quaint!"

Roselle addressed her father in a "continued-from-our-last" sort of tone, obviously argumentative, and Letitia pricked her ears for the mood of his reply. Her personal bias leaned toward not arousing tigers when unnecessary.

Dignity prompted him to defend a situation he was powerless to prevent.

"So long as he doesn't commandeer my cabbages, where's the harm?"

"But he does, dear father, you may be sure he does."

The colonel glanced up fiercely. He

disliked being interrupted in the report of a good match, far more than he hated being "done."

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"What makes you say that?"

"The household books. Considering the price of everything these days, his charges are absurdly low."

"Do you mean to tell me you are buying vegetables with acres of garden all around us—enough to feed a regiment?"

"Not at all! How can you think me so idiotic? I refer to the washing account. You see, my dear, Draper owns the laundry, also,"

"Does my shirts damnably, then! I'll have to speak to him."

At this Roselle sat erect, galvanized by fear. Her father boasted just that kind of bone-headed, bullying independence which leaps from the frying pan into the fire, and then raises Cain about the consequences. Her eyes emitted sparks.

"Not a word, if you please. I simply don't know where we would turn if he left us. Have you forgotten the siege we went through when Spigley moved to Pink's? We'd rather have our meals served by the greengrocer than not served at all—wouldn't we, aunt Letitia?"

Miss Rothwell bolted a mouthful of egg and smiled rather guiltily. Marking time leaves its victims nervously anxious to please. Her white hands fluttered. They bespoke the unathletic, indoor woman, earmarked of the past. She even wore a chatelaine which clinked and jingled faint accompaniment to every motion. Casual observers summed Letitia up as a survival and dismissed her; but to the more acute this very chain gave food for thought. No longer did it bear the autocratic housewife's ring. When circumstances had forced the little spinster to leave her cherished keys in other hands, observant eyes opined she would be lost without her family gods and prompted to incongruous replacement. Now cigarettes and matches, powder puff and rouge outraged its purpose; and though Letitia scorned to use these modern consolations, gratitude welded the gift on her identity. Thanks to her younger niece, the dainty lady continued to clash musically through life.

Letitia's face flushed, due as much to the hastily swallowed egg as to prior knowledge, but her sudden color screamed secrets as she murmured:

"Draper. Fancy! The greengrocery, too—and he a butler!"

The older and the younger woman regarded each other hostilely. Roselle wondered what was new, and would not have been slow to question, but the roar of a muffler cut-out, an abrupt silence of stopped machinery, and steps on crunching gravel delivered them from explanations.

The dining-room door banged open. A girl rushed in, and at once their backwater, so placid and proper a moment before, seethed to a vortex. Magnetic energy and vim poured through it.

She was a little girl, but a straight proposition, back and eyes and character, as any one could tell at a glance. In a chauffeur's livery, prune and buff, topcoat and gaiters, her figure showed refinement and beautiful proportions. Her cheeks glowed pinkly with health and wind. Her hair escaped from under the driving cap and asserted itself in curls almost alive enough to be called vivid. It was brown, too. Her face was brown. Her hands were brown and dirty.

"Morning, my sunny cherubs! Morning, dad!" she cried, and, crossing to the buffet, dropped a casual kiss on his bald head.

Colonel Rothwell grunted. The others greeted her after their various ways—Letitia with happy flutterings, Roselle with a sniff. Eruptions of Weg into the family circle were common and generally annoying. She failed to con-

form to class, and, while conscious of her charm, father and sister were always uneasy as to what she would spring on them next.

"My dear girl, wherever did you get those clothes? Is it a fancy costume? Are you arriving home from a dance at ten a. m. without changing?"

Weg ignored Roselle's implied reproof and answered her first question.

"I should have thought you'd recognize the blended hues. Ripping, isn't it? A complete washout, though. I'm buckshee again! Just driving the car back to London and then ta-ta!"

"Have you been in the position long, dearie?" asked Letitia, beaming. It was perfectly evident that, in one pair of eyes, the queen could do no wrong.

"A week—and didn't give satisfaction; so it's time to toddle. I'm afraid the Rothwells are ground flyers—not cut out for real work—what?"

"Disgraceful!" rumbled the colonel behind his page.

"Absurd!" echoed Roselle. "Since when, pray, have you thought it necessary to make an exhibition of yourself in the Hallam's livery? I am too stunned for words! Aunt and I won't be able to hold our heads up in the neighborhood if you persist."

"I am not complaining," Letitia interjected hurriedly.

"I'd bet on it, old bean! You're never one to put the wind up! You don't seem very jolly here," she continued between mouthfuls. "This hour rings untrue to the happy-family-party stuff, and so forth. Humor does not bubble from the fount nor laughter purl. What's wrong? Roselle kicking again?

The gusto of her manners, as much as her words, offended Roselle, who gazed at her sister in critical disdain.

Which leg is it this time, sis?"

"Don't be more vulgar than you can help," the look admonished; but all she said was:

"Do you know that our Draper owns

the greengrocery and the laundry and the livery?"

"What's that?"

"The hacks, dad, and the garage. Draper runs 'em. If it weren't for him you wouldn't be able to get to your bally club. Don't offend Draper or he may put you in the pool forever."

The colonel beat a hasty retreat.

"I've found him a most efficient butler always."

"The garage! Whatever is England coming to?" cried Roselle, throwing up her hands in an old-fashioned gesture invented by her great-great-grand-mothers to show off the whiteness of theirs. She was vexed by a gleam of amusement in her aunt's eye. Letitia recognized the business. She had practiced it herself. But if her sly look baited Roselle, more annoying still was Weg's frankly mocking laugh.

"Ha, ha! Wake up, sis! You're making the bloomer of a lifetime with that decorative impedimenta pose. This earth is in a new era! Better cut out the early Victorian lines and join the claque while our profiteers and other noble winners of the World War march on to fame. You'll be jolly lucky if they don't march over you. I wonder if Draper, the merchant prince, could command me another rasher?"

She rose and pulled the bell cord as she talked.

"Do you know he has bought ten cottages at Harden Heath? Fact is, he owns the village. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he owned this house—the rent's been raised."

Aunt Letitia opened her lips to speak and shut them again, fidgeted, fluttered, tinkled a little golden tune, and eyed her brother. If under her meekness smoldered any banked fires of revolt, the colonel never guessed it. She never gave him cause. She knew him and she was afraid. She had borne his yoke in her youth, but now she feared for him. Since he had grown so stout

her mind was filled with a mortal factor of his towering rages.

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"More bacon, Draper." Roselle's tone touched the acme of perfection, refusing a family servant any higher dignity than butler, ceding him his due. She, too, had her passing fears. All might have been well, but as he turned to go the irrepressible Weg threw him her merry challenge.

"By the way, Draper, do you own this house? Or are the local gossips ragging us?"

He closed the door again, confidently, as it were, closing himself inside.

"Now you mention it, miss; yes, miss. That is, in a manner of speaking. Pre lent a round sum on it to General Lawlor."

The butler cleared his throat, glanced at his master, and continued:

"And things being as they are, miss, I'd feel obliged if the family wouldn't knock no more turf off the bowling green, nor strike matches on the woodwork, nor track their dirty boots hacross the drawing-room carpet."

Colonel Rothwell, who had been pretending not to hear, lowered his paper. The eyes of the two men met. For a moment they regarded each other as human beings, equals in the give and take; then the master repudiated change, ambition, success, as he had repudiated vital matters all his life.

"Have my sticks ready, Draper. The general will pick me up at half past ten. That will do."

"Very good, sir."

No sooner had the door closed on Draper's stolid back than bluster and madness broke loose. The colonel bounced from his chair; he made a hand grenade of the *Morning Post* and threw it savagely, narrowly escaping Letitia's face. He ramped, He raved.

"Disgraceful! Positively disgraceful! Didn't know Lawlor was hit. Owns the roof over our heads, does he? Damn it! This comes of selling up Roths'

Well. This comes of renting! What did I say? Confound it, Letitia! Why didn't you invent those damned stockings of yours earlier when they would have been some practical help? Just like a woman—always do the right thing at the wrong time! Owned by servants!"

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CHAPTER II.

He stormed himself out of the room at last and the women sighed with relief. They were accustomed to the colonel—the whole house was accustomed to the colonel. Draper, who had been waiting, appeared, delivered himself of bacon, and retired.

Weg, settling to enjoy her rasher, murmured:

"And to think he made it all out of corns!"

This sentence, being obscure, piqued the elder sister's curiosity. She condescended when seeking information.

"My darling angel, whatever are you babbling about?"

"Corns, callouses, horny induration—thickening of the epidermis, corns on the soles of his feet—get it?"

Aunt Letitia tittered.

"How perfectly disgusting!" cried Roselle, her nice sense of propriety flying to arms.

"Old-fashioned again, sis. 'Disgusting' is a dead one now. Things may seem to be, but they're not. As a nation we have grown technical and our language follows. Just to think, Draper got off the whole war scot-free on account of those little callous places on the soles of his feet. Of course, there were other complications, but that started him; threw him out when he volunteered. Cricky! A man never knows his luck!"

"Did he tell you so?" asked Letitia sharply. Feet touched her interests nearly. The only spot of weakness in her pleasant human make-up was jealousy for Twiller-Twisters. "Wrong!" cried her niece with evident desire to shock. "Much, much worse! Not hearing, cherubs, seeing—I've seen 'em. I was attached to the examiner's office, you remember, and having a sort of family interest in Draper, I peeked through the crack of the doctor's door at his bare tootsies."

She maneuvered for "vertical gusts," as they say, and was not disappointed. Roselle let her have it.

"Little beast! How could you? A butler's feet! It's immoral! It's revolting! You must be always thinking about them from soup to savory! Between you and father, I'll have to dismiss the man."

"Don't. That is, not on my account, for umpteen reasons: first, there's no recurrence of the theme; second, I'll be in London on a job; third, you haven't defiled your sense of sight; fourthly, all men have feet—haven't they, Letitia?"

At this appeal the spinster fluttered into office and delivered judgment.

"I think, Roselle, you take dear Weg too sericusly—a trifle too sericusly. As she so wisely says, all men do have feet, thank God, except a few in hospital."

Her beaming face witnessed comfortable assurance of her personal benefactions to mankind. She was thinking: "There might have been more in hospital without feet, poor dears, had I not invented Twiller-Twisters."

"It is all in the day's work," said Weg. "If you had seen some of the things I've seen——"

"Please, please! Spare us your experiences. I forbid them. Father and I fail to understand how any decent girl could so far forget her maidenly reserve, and what is due her people and everything, as to rush into the nasty side of war and wallow in it; while all the time there were so many lady-like occupations open."

"Right-o! Somebody had to do the unladylike things. Some of us had to be useful, while you and your ilk were being ornamental. Let sleeping dogs lie. The burning question is not what I did in the past, but what am I going to do now?"

"I knew you'd never stick it—you never stick anything!"

Her sister sneered.

Secret conviction of the uselessness of self put Roselle always on the aggressive in criticizing women's work, while her patronizing superiority lashed.

Weg to fury.

"Stick it! Well, I hope your rabbit dies! You—with your bazaars and charity flips! What if I did peg out on the air force? Anybody would have been fed up with fourteen months dishwashing and kitchen clutter, living in rotten hostles, and no proper grub! Besides, I wanted to learn flying."

"And got demobilized the first minute in order to be able to do so. Nobody wanted you to fly. What use have you made of your certificate? It is positively too quaint to hear you W. R. A. F's. and W. A. A. C's. bragging about serving your country."

"I did my bit in the Women's Le-

gion."

Roselle laughed. She chose to consider Weg's refusal of a modest order as a family joke.

"Made yourself conspicuous dabbling

here and there!"

"Girls, girls! Do let us try and prac-

tice peace, now we have it."

Letitia's reproofs were so infrequent that even the mildest of them took effect.

Weg addressed her aunt.

"I should think Roselle would be delighted to have me chuck this livery. She can hold up her silly old head again now. But it's not my fault. The son of the house is a spark; he arranges for blow-outs in remote localities."

"Six jobs is it, or sixteen, since you have been demobbed—and none of them

respectable?"

Weg spiced up in her own defense.

"They have all been respectable-deadly respectable and dull as ditch water. Reason enough to can 'em. First lively, interesting, romantic job I find I cling to like a limpet. You don't realize what a beastly fag it is changing around. But at least I'm not living on Letitia."

Unimaginative as Roselle was, she could not pretend to ignore such a direct, nasty thrust; and cutting truth made her hedge into the defensive,

"I'm sure it is ever so much more respectable and nicer every way to be quietly in one's own aunt's house, than running loose as you are. War times are war times, but now it is our first duty to bring back the old order. Father doesn't like your working, either. It is most undignified for us all. If you haven't any sense of what is suitable and proper, I have. I shall stay right here till I am married. Aunt Letitia doesn't mind; do you, dearest?"

She reached for the spinster's hand and gave it a little pat. Roselle could be very coaxing when she wanted to. Letitia colored with pleasure.

"No, no, child! Of course not! It is, indeed, a great pleasure to have some one to spend one's money on—I cannot imagine what I would do without you and your dear father; and matrimony is a noble end. We must not forget the lofty object of our sacrifices. But I hope—I do hope, dear,

you will find the right young man."

For a tense moment both girls were painfully conscious of their aunt's life history. She had "stayed right there" waiting for marriage Tradition whispered that a number of the Rothwell ladies had been hard to please, or found less pleasing, and had stayed right there. Roselle's determination faltered, glimpsing the family specter, a wasted beauty featured after the lines of her own face, with fair hair grayed and frizzed, thin elbows in old-fashioned sleeves, hesitant steps, and timid speeches. In maid-

enly demeanor rather like a whipped pup looking for a kind word. This unwelcome one hovered on their mental vision. They sat chilled and silent, till Letitia, who had seen the ghost before, who had been haunted by it with that familiarity which breeds contempt, blew it away in a wavering breath.

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"There is always Arthur Mosely."

Fact but increased their secret dread. Mr. Mosely had for years concentrated in his person the eligibility of the whole district. He was aunt Letitia's right-hand man and passing poor on several hundred pounds a year. Add to the picture forty, bald, and academic.

Prior to 1914 Mosely had figured as the preëminently suitable secretary of a peace foundation; and now, in a certain sense, he might be called distinguished, for, although sound in mind and limb, he had done nothing toward his country's ends—not even as a special constable. He had served nowhere, had taken neither major nor minor part in poisonous war. It may be said for Mosely that he had never pretended to hide as a conscientious objector behind the screen of his former calling.

He was a feeble person, lacking a happy knack for luck and callouses like Draper, and his immunity sprang unsought from the wicked machinations of his widowed mother, whose sole support she claimed. That fervid dame could bear no hint of volunteering, drafts, or danger. She resolutely fought her boy's idea of his duty indoors and everybody else's idea of her dear boy's duty outside the house. By arguing which department he should grace she held him graceless to the end.

She persisted till the very hour of truce, and then desisted suddenly. Success killed her. Knowing that whate'er betide her "Artie" now need never serve as cannon fodder, raised her on joyous wings and wafted her beyond the pearly gates. And Arthur mourned her, for he had loved his mother,

though popular opinion let him down heavily on the hard, cold outcome of her influence.

He was not really a bad sort and While shirking service clever withal. he had visited in hospitals, and had extracted many a moving tale from wounded heroes. These, adeptly and early done in two slim volumes, enjoyed a vigorous sale and turned in considerably more than the author's own stipend to the Society for Supplying Artificial Limbs, to which he had presented them. Of course, Mosely's friends said he had in this way done his bit; but the British public refused recognition in the flesh and made itself obnoxious. Having to apologize for one's very existence through leaden-footed years, is apt to dash the liveliest spirits. And Artie's was a serious soul.

National browbeating, moreover, had grafted on Mr. Mosely's reticence a hesitating speech. He almost stammered—not quite. Except in moments of excitement, he only strained his hearers to the point of tears, not shrieks, and his control of the mother tongue was fast returning under treatment. Now that civilians might cross the street without encountering khaki, and their private affairs were no longer open to impudent invasion by patriotic ladies, it was hoped he would recover.

Aunt Letitia thought the world of him; but it is useless to profess his popularity in younger circles. Resigned, he courted his recoveries—a double need. For the rash young man had further complicated his past by falling hopelessly in love with Roselle. One had but to hear her spurn his name to know how hopelessly.

"Mosely! -Never! Not if he were the last man on earth! Aunt Letitia, you silly old dear, how can you suggest such a perfectly impossible parti? My husband must be rich, rich, rich! I must have motors and horses and houses and clothes!" "Draper is a bachelor," suggested Weg.

Roselle sprang from her chair.

"You shan't insult me! I will not stand it!"

She stamped her foot in a pretty fury and raged to the window, her face as lowering as a winter sky. They were used to tantrums—the girl favored her father; yet something dependent, forlorn in her anger caught Weg's pity, and while the fun of an apt dig still winked and twinkled in the golden eyes, a kindly heart repented.

"I'm a mean devil to give sis such a jolt!" Weg thought. "Poor dud, she hasn't a vestige of a sense of humor! She's not fair game."

Thinking and acting were one with her, so a moment later an arm was flung over Roselle's shoulder.

"Don't be in such a wax, old thing! The joke was a bit crude, I confess, even if you did invite it. I apologize." She smiled, and a dimple came and went in her left cheek.

The other woman gloomed.

"Look here," Weg proceeded, "if you're in earnest about this marrying business—for motors and diamonds and what not, I can help. I have a millionaire up my sleeve, an American—a stout fellow in every way. Spiffing catch! Oodles of money!"

Weg's descriptive powers lowered Roselle's indignation from freezing heights to temperate zone, and finally to torrid interest.

"Where did you meet an American millionaire?" she cried enviously.

Weg had meant well, but she could not be serious, could not deny herself the thrill of outrage. Readjusting her motor cap and gathering up her gloves, she replied in an offhand manner, perhaps a trifle too offhand:

"I roomed with him a while ago."

The virgin ghost of the unmarried Rothwells fled from the moral impact of that blow, made one leap into eter-

nity, and disappeared forever. Roselle stood speechless. Even Letitia's tolerance was shocked.

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"You-roomed with him!"

The voice was supplicating, incredulous, filled with entreaty, as one who would say: "Do not assure me of the worst."

Instantly Weg knew she had overdone the effect. She saw herself a pariah. Each object in that solemp place seemed to accent the violence of her crime. The bishop's portrait frowned; old silver dimmed to the spot on their family honor; old mahogany reflected the sanguine color of its stain. Her aunt had such a confounding gift for expressing much in little. She brought a culprit up short and put one on defense.

"Well, shared digs with him then. At Pink's—the day I was demobbed. It's nothing—separate rooms, you know, and all that. Perfectly proper."

The last word, like a familiar cue, stabbed Roselle into action.

"You may call it proper, young lady, but I am going to tell father. He'll not put up with such light ways—your lack of morals; and it's high time he knew about them. Sleeping in the same suite with an unmarried man!"

Her indignation spoiled Letitia's triumph. The blizzard blotted out repentance; those icy particles of speech stung Weg to anger.

"Oh, bust your old morals! Would it have been any better with a married man? I had to do it. I tell you there wasn't a bed in London! Would you have me spend a night on the Embankment?"

"I wouldn't have you do anything, nor undo it. You are no sister of mine!"

Roselle turned her back abruptly. Outside the window stood the Hallam car. Whether the great car, with its poignant suggestion, or Weg's voice ulsimately melted her ire, is a moot point. She pretended not to be listening.

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Miss Rothwell fluttered to an armchair and smoothed her silken lap, accompanying the motion by anticipatory jingles. Despite maiden shame, she felt pleasurably thrilled; in the husks of disgrace lay a kernel romantic. Her "Tell me all about it, dear," sounded more an invitation to gossip than confession. Letitia was delightfully human and adroit, gaining her point where others failed.

Weg condescended to explain.

"There I was stranded in London in my uniform, not even a toothbrush, and no prospect of getting home, thanks to our beautiful train service. I tried hotels and hostles and boarding houses and pensions. I wasn't entitled to a billet any longer-and they don't care a damn for you at headquarters, anyhow! When I was about in despair, and tired to death, I thought of Spiglev. What's the use, I said, in having a former family butler head factotum at Pink's if one never goes near the hotel? Here's for comfort and a ripping good sleep! If Pink's doesn't want to take me in sans luggage, the old boy will square it. But there wasn't a room to be had at Pink's-not a corner.

"'Spigley,' I remonstrated, 'you've got to get me a place to lie down.'

"'It's not to be had here, miss."
"'Not a bed of any sort?"

"'I would give you up mine,' he said, rather flurried, 'but, of course, it is in

the men's quarters."

"I laughed right into his nice old red face; but we both knew this was no laughing matter. I sat down. 'Here I am, and here I stay, or else I move on with the evening parade. There isn't an unoccupied room in London.'

"He was dreadfully upset at my suggestion of the streets. 'I believe it, miss. We've never been so full at Pink's before—that is to say, not right full up. Why, they have even put Mr. Tomlins in the bridal suite.' He stopped short and eyed me with the most comical naughty air. 'Mr.Tomlins is an American. A very harmless sort of young man.'

"I twigged the idea. 'Dressing room?'

"'And bath.' Spigley lowered his voice. 'We arranged it once before with a couple, for a W. R. E. N., and there was no trouble.' Then he added, rather scared: 'But, of course, it wouldn't be seemly, miss, not for you! I shouldn't care to think what the colonel would say if it came to his ears.'

"'Leave dad out,' I said, 'and go and break the news to Mr. Tomlins. Don't take no for an answer. Tell him I will retire at once and be gone before he is awake. Tell him he simply must have me—government regulations—woman in uniform—billeted on him, and so forth. Exaggerate, Spigley, lie, if need be; lash him with red tape.'"

"Well?"

"That's the count. I went to bed, leaving my service cap and gaiters in a conspicuous place, and hiding my corsets under my pillow. I was bone tired and never slept better. I heard nothing Tomlins-not even a snore. Doubtless he forgot it wasn't a man he was harboring. Sneaking off before sunup I didn't so much as peep through the curtains to glimpse his tousled head, though, of course, I made Spigley show him to me later on. A chappie as long as to-day and to-morrow, with a long, thin nose, horn-rimmed spectacles, and a surprising chin-abrupt, firm, contradictory to the rest of him, maybe, but There are three in the partyan elderly couple from Sue Luck City, and the innocuous youth. Rich as Crossus, they say, and evidently unattached. It's a click for you, sis!"

"Sue Luck City," murmured Letitia.
"But you'll have to put your pride in your pocket and look sharp. He is too

good a catch to be left lying about How are you going to flush him? Could Spigley introduce you?

Napoo! A bit thick that!"

Luck," Letitia. "Sue reiterated "Didn't the Whaley-Piffles go to Sue Luck City? We might call." taking her courage in both hands, "If you don't call. Roselle, on friends of such old friends, why-I think I must."

"This Mrs. Bones may not even know the Whaley-Piffles!" cried her niece.

Letitia flushed hotly, but stuck to her guns.

"If so, my dear, we will hardly be reminded of our blunder. Old Piff is a duke's grandson!"

"I'll buzz you up in the Hallam's

bus," offered Weg.

At that Roselle succumbed. flew to dress, returning booted and gloved, with the eye of a general, the step of a conqueror, and the manners

of a cooing dove.

"Would it not be wise to forget your adventure with Mr. Tomlins?" she suggested, adjusting about her queenly shoulders a simple pointed fox, one of aunt Letitia's most recent pleasures. And Weg, who saw her lark as less harmful in the light of family honor, met the overture halfway.

"Right-o, I'll never mention it again if you don't. Here's my hand."

CHAPTER III.

All things considered, it was as well that Mrs. Higginbothan Bones had been detained at a fitting in Grosvenor Square the afternoon Roselle called at least Albert Bones thought so.

Essentially a kind man, he had begun by humoring his fiancée, and Miss Bella proved the very woman to take advantage of a false start. She had been still pretty, with a doll-like prettiness, at twenty-five, when Albert met and married her; and, having successfully played the part of rose in May, she clung to it tenaciously till the brien outgrew the bud. Like most of the when the little old lady consulted her mirror she still saw reflected Belinda Bones at her best; a misunderstanding which led to muslins and fichus draped on a suggestively avoirdupois figure, and garden hats in their youthful joyousness ignoring crow's-feet or the sagging cheeks which refused to be lifted by the cunningest scalp folds and stitchings of New York's most expensive beauty doctor.

Poor humanity still finds it hard to kick against the pricks. This struggle with the monster Time produced its natural result. Bella's temper shortened and her tongue sharpened till her relatives wished in chorus she would have the grace to grow old decently; and strangers spoke of her as an impossible woman. With ever-increasing bitterness she turned them from her one by one-all but Albert. He remained her steadfast knight, whether from sheer nobility of character or weakness, who shall say? God-given imagination

would be needed to figure Bella as the

path of least resistance—yet his chin

receded!

Aside from this peculiarity, Bones was a handsome and attractive man, well groomed always, with money to burn and, more important, the knowledge and air of a person accustomed to offer incense with worship. Possibly Bella had a right to be jealous. Gossip whispered the bitterest drop in her cup was the knowledge of her four years' seniority, and that her Albert's tireless patience toward one woman had been rewarded by kindnesses from many. Certainly his heart was roomy and as easily adjusted as elastic-sided boots; but his tastes were simple—wine, woman, and a good game of poker "filled the bill," to use his own expression. He pooh-poohed the idea of any fellow with time and money to gratify these desires, mooning around like Tomlins, standing open-mouthed in market squares, and permitting guides to pluck and stuff him as if he had been a Thanksgiving goose.

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On the other hand, his surplus freedom while Bella shopped bored him nearly to extinction. He reckoned Miss Rothwell's card, sent up during his wife's absence, a diversion worth investigating. Albert's experience of life taught him that the "fruity" was rarely handed in on silver salvers; he hardly hoped for more than a pastime when descending in the lift. But it took only one glint of a practiced eye at Roselle's small white ear and honey-colored hair, to see that he had found an avecation

American hospitality bade him offer her tea against Mrs. Bones' return, and she accepted, fulfilling his highest expectations with an easy adaptability which he had not looked for in an Englishwoman. Roselle cared not a hoot about meeting Bella Bones; an introduction to Tomlins was the all-important point; but, coming from Hertfordshire, her waiting seemed excusable, and Tomlins might drift by at any minne.

"Will he be like his friend?" she wondered. Weg had led her to believe the opposite; but then Weg saw things queerly, missing essential facts. Albert had charmed Roselle at once—his dignity, his clothes, so very correct, his reserve, his veiled admiration, even his chin. "I could manage him," she thought. "If only—"

The wish remained unworded while, for a blissful half hour, the pleasantest since his arrival, Albert sat under a palm, the strains of Zenebra's orchestra filling his ears, and Roselle filling his eyes. Then conscience, or what passed for conscience, his sense of discretion, began to throb. Like toothache it opened with vague mutterings and worked up to a fine frenzy as the day waned. Bella had been known to re-

turn from her modiste in the very worst of tempers; and Bella in a bad temper was perfectly capable of making a jealous scene. So the husbandly attention wandered as he watched the door in agonized anticipation.

Roselle, noting Mr. Bones' steady glance, saw his eyes brighten eagerly, and followed their direction.

"My friend, Cornelius Tomlins Shall we ask him over?"

Not that Albert felt any desire to share a good thing with Tomlins. His mortal fear of Bella forced his hand.

"Better chaperoned now than severed for good and all," ran his thoughts.

"How delightfully American!" Roselle gurgled. Her evident diversion suited Albert's mood.

"Tomlins is a picture," he agreed, signaling a waiter.

"A whole reel," she chimed in, and they both laughed.

Cornelius justified her simile. clothes, a muddy drab in color, approached the amplitude of uncurled films, and his extreme height suggested something going on for hours, forever, the beholder might have said, had not Western style devised an extinguisher in the shape of a gray felt hat, round, flat, and sudden as a curate's, from under the edge of which the wearer regarded his world mildly through shellrimmed lenses. His boots, too, seemed to stunt his growth, ending in bulbous He had outgrown his stub toes. strength and, like a girl, gave in the middle, with an exact replica of the débutante's slump, once so famous and so fashionable.

"The jam, sir, if you please, sir," Spigley was saying a moment later, as he deftly removed a menaced dish from Tomlins' descending arm.

"We're not used to these jam teas at home," apologized the culprit.

"Just so, sir. The sandwiches, if you please."

"Confound it, man! Where am I to put my elbows?" cried Cornelius, trying to remove ham paste from his sleeve with a napkin. "Your tables aren't half big enough."

"It's all a question of accommodation, sir, London being so full now."

A sliver of a waiter tiptoed up and whispered to his superior: "Mr. Bones will be glad to have you join him and the lady, sir."

Tomlins was about to answer negatively. He hated Bella, a condition Spigley had divined—it paid him to divine the preferences of gentlemen stopping at Pink's—so now he was ready to forestall a regretable misunderstanding.

"Not Mrs. Bones—the young lady, sir—on the gallery. Thank you, sir."

Cornelius glanced up, caught Albert's eye, stared and beamed. His manner as he rose was almost solemn, for he realized he was about to experience one of the prospects which had enticed him halfway around the world-he was about to be presented to an English beauty. A situation to react on delicate nerves. Thoughts of Lily Langtry and ham paste whirled madly in his brain while ascending the shallow stairs; unfortunately ham paste won. He was conscious of making some inane remark about it as he sank on the couch beside Miss Rothwell, and the knowledge did not help. Shy, awkward, at his stupid worst, he floundered from platitude to platitude, till Roselle, disgusted, turned her back and rattled into a lively flirtation with their host.

Cornelius felt relieved rather than offended at being left out. England and the English had burst on his ordered intelligence with such a medley of surprises that he welcomed spots of leisure in which to sort and index his emotions. Peace and protection through the most embarrassing hour of their day suited him only too well. Here a man gained the privileges of the beauty's profile and, under her wing, might hold the noxione cup of tea in his hand for an indefinite time without seeming conspicuous.

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Nature had designed Cornelius Tomlins for a snake fence or a poet; his father had educated him for a lawyer. He reflected both influences.

So far his life had followed the lines of paternal achievement. Child-hood had passed amid no larger splendor than the whole heart of his mother, who reared her lamb to be a good boy, and left him on the threshold of a Western college, from which, in due course, he emerged master of facts and dates, with the bur of uplift firmly tangled in his wool.

Docile youth had picked no quarrel against his father's choice of a profession. Keats and Shelley and an unused law desk companioned him happily until the old man's death. But with his millions came responsibility, nor was Cornelius the sort to shirk his duty. If he made up his mind to do a thing, that thing was promptly done. So, the other side of the globe being pointed out to him as the Elysian fields of business enterprise, he heroically assumed his burden and packed his trunk, comforting reluctance with the thought of England as a place for self-improvement.

God knows he did not yearn to travel! He hated to circumscribe his belongings within the limits of a steamer trunk, to buy his ticket, or to board the train. His soul balked at crossing the vast Atlantic once he had seen it, and disliked the idea still more after a week's experience. There were trials he had underestimated. But, whatever the voyage did to him physically, it developed to the nth power a couple of latent emotions: one, the longing to know a pretty woman well. Bashfulness kept Cornelius from defining the exact limits of his adjective, enough to feel the want had lain dormant in him, unconfessed, for years. He had hoped to bring it off on deck with the vivid, briny nonchalance of a hero in a five-reel play, but his inner man, proving sadly incapable, scratched that ambition at the start.

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Falling down on this second wideopen invitation to Romance, even as he had failed to bring it off with any of the fair coeds during his college terms, he realized finally that for him woman must be a serious and lengthy undertaking—yet he was the more determined.

Tomlins' second emotion evolved itself from a dawning into a flaming hatred of Mrs. Higginbothan Bones. Never once through all those hideous days of seesaw motion had his defenseless length sunk unconscious into forty dreamless winks but Bella's strident wice aroused him.

"Albert, I've dropped my book."
"Albert, there is a draft at my feet."
"Albert, that careless steward has forgotten my soup." "Albert, my smelling salts." Albert here and Albert there, and: "Albert! How dare you walk with that red-headed harpy after what I said?"

Where the misery of the sea ended Mrs. Bones began. And England capped the climax by upsetting all his preconceived ideas. In toto, Cornelius felt about as happy as an urchin turned head over heels and shaken out of a twenty-story window.

He had landed with a Baedeker and London sights and sounds all cut and dried in uplift, ready to be put together like a picture puzzle. He was to be awed by Westminster Abbey, scornful of Buckingham Palace, impressed by the Parliament buildings, aroused in St. Paul's Cathedral, intrigued by the Tower, tickled at Madame Tussaud's, amused in the Zoo, bored by the Academy, overcome by Turner, interested in Hogarth, charmed with eighteenth-century English art, improved by the British Museum, appalled at Whitechapel,

piqued by self-sufficiency trotting in the Row, embarassed at Church parade, thrilled by Covent Garden opera, ruined, or nearly so, at the Derby—and the only sensation of them all he could honestly claim was surprise. Every variety of astonishment widened his vision, from mild surprise at the dirtiness of the English collar and the London street, to overwhelming wonder at official means.

Spigley was directly responsible for the latter, though his victim did not guess it. Spigley of the smug face and noncommittal manner.

Even Albert Bones had been knocked out by the story of Tomlins' all-night adventure with a uniformed female, turned loose on him by government order, snugly tucked into his dressing-room bed and sealed with the king's arms, as it were. For once Cornelius held the post of conteur. He felt himself envied, and, swelling toadlike with the knowledge of his own sophistication, ordered a magnum to drink the damsel's health.

Albert sighed.

"I wish to Heaven I had left Bella at home! But London used to be such a dull old hole!"

But that was not the end of it. Tomlins showed signs of being obsessed by the affair, alternating between pride and bewilderment, till Spigley, thoroughly alarmed for the credit of the house and his own reputation, decided to take the youth in hand.

To be adopted by one of the Spigleys of this world is in itself a liberal education. Cornelius liked the old man from the start, shocked his sense of decorum horribly by offering him drinks, and swallowed his sugar-coated pills of advice with frank insouciance. Sometimes it amused him to turn the tables and rout his master's form, realizing gayly that the London of to-day was almost as foreign to Spigley as to a foreigner. Cornered, the butler fell back on apol-

"It's the war does it," grew into a

defensive refrain.

"But your nation has the reputation of being so clean, Spigley. Diogenes and the original tub are not more celebrated than an English officer with his."

"Soap, sir."

"They have me guessing!"

"Not only the present price of linen, sir, but the damaging mixtures these miserable laundries wash it with must be taken into account."

"And I did expect my shoes to be

shined," continued Tomlins,

"Aren't they done proper?" asked the old man guiltily. "Any complaint should be made to the office, sir."

"They are done all right if I leave them outside my door for a week."

Spigley shook his white head.

"Service, sir! I regret to say a good boots is very hard to come by these days. It's the war does it, sir."

"I bought myself a waterproof and a bang-up umbrella before leaving, Spigley—the finest umbrella in Chicago. I thought I heard somebody say 'rain.' But the first time I put my nose outside a London door there were the streets inches deep in snow. Landed in April, too!"

"Quite exceptional in April, sir."

"But the sun's been shining every day for a month since then. How do you account for that? To be so un-English in England gives me the willies. Your reputation is a busted flush. System—continuity—bah! This country's just as topsy-turvy as the rest of the ding-blasted universe!"

"If I might venture a suggestion, sir

-there's been a war."

"So we heard—rumors of it, anyway. But seeing is believing. I expected to find a wounded hero, hat in hand, on every corner. Why, in America we had cold chills at the fancied ordeal of promenading your afflicted

thoroughfares. I've seen just three sufferers so far, and not at street corners, either, but on crutches in the park— Johnnies in bright blue—and they seemed to be having a good time."

"Hospital blue. Thank God, sir, the boys are being properly looked after! There's a deal of mistaken sentiment about it; but it's better to have too much than too little. I have seen ladies in the busses, sir, offer their seats to gentlemen in mufti, civilians, sir, suffering from a touch of gout—very embarrassing for them, sir."

Cornelius laughed.

"Oh, the women! One does not look to ticket choppers and railway porters for romance. I've only had a chance to talk to one Englishwoman so far, and I didn't—didn't make the most of it."

Spigley's eyes fell. He fidgeted nervously with the saltcellers.

"Cross your heart, Spigley—what sort of a woman was she? What you English would call a lady?"

A vision of Weg and Roselle and the colonel, of the family as it had been when he served them at Roths' Well, in the good old prewar days, flashed on the butler's memory. For a moment he forgot to guard his tongue.

"A lady! Miss Weg a lady! Most certainly, sir! One of the oldest families in Hertfordshire."

ones in Tierrordsmire.

Cornelius stopped amazed.

"Then you know her! A put-up job,

But Spigley had collected himself.

"I was obliged to find a billet," he said with dignity.

The American's quick resentment melted to persuasiveness.

"Look here, my man, I've never been intrigued by a skirt before. Give me a tip, won't you? Put me wise. I'll make it worth your while—and no disrespect meant to her."

"Impossible, sir!" cried Spigley, rais-

ing both hands the more effectually to repudiate temptation.

"Be a sport!" coaxed Tomlins, his mild eyes shining behind his glasses, guileless as a newborn babe's.

Spigley frowned.

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"I couldn't do it, sir, noways. I would for you if for any one; but the idea's out of the question. It wouldn't be right, to my manner of thinking. Not what young gentlemen call 'playing the game'—not on my part nor on yours, sir, if you'll pardon the liberty of my mentioning it."

Cornelius refused to wilt, as he should have done, under this rebuke.

"You don't suppose I wish to annoy the young lady?" And the poet continued. "Woman is the noblest of God's creations, Spigley. A man that is a man must worship her from the cradle to the grave. I respect the sex—always have and always will. I admire them as a sex; my hat is off to every girl who turned out at her country's call and did things. But the emotion is abstract, general and abstract."

He hesitated, then eased into vox humana.

"Sometimes a fellow looks for something warmer. Woman on a pedestal is mighty aloof; inspiriting, but chilly. If they were only a little lower than the angels which they are, they'd be easier to approach. So, when one of them comes right down hand in hand with her duty, and shows a man she trusts him, as that girl showed me, why she imposes a sort of obligation on him, doesn't she? Obligations of interest as well as honor. A heroine in khaki serving her country just like the soldiers, that's how I think of her, for, of course, she was in uniform officially all the time, even if I could take stock of her army boots and baby gai-

"I did that, Spigley, I confess. No-

body thought to move my pajamas and brushes, so I had to go after them, and I saw her shoes-God bless her !- about as big as a minute. But I never looked at the girl herself, not once. Her being there on duty made her sacred. fellow who would have taken a liberty with his eyes or in his thoughts is a cur. I swear to you I haven't a notion now whether she is tall or short or dark or fair. I never glanced her way; but I lay awake all night thinking how nobly these women have sacrificed their time and pleasure to the general good. Harm I reverence her! If that girl liked me, I'd be willing to marry her to-morrow-that is, if she's under thirty."

"And hasn't a husband already, sir," the butler added in his urbane manner.

Lawyer, man, and poet altogether, Tomlins glared. He thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets and sauntered toward the door. There he turned back.

"Thought you would knock the icing off the gingerbread for safety, didn't you? Married? Maybe she was married; maybe she was widowed; maybe she was laughing at me up her sleeve; maybe she had studied jujutsu and could have knocked a drayman out in the first round; maybe I'm a simp—but still I crave to meet her, Spigley. If the lady is married, there cannot be so much objection. Maybe you let something slip."

The old man offered no reply. He dared not hint that this rival of Edith Cavell and other martyrs had been demobilized before the fact. Women's champion laughed aloud.

"I'll bet my last dollar you said Miss Meg, from which deduction naturally follows that the party of the first part is single and her name is Margaret. How's that for a stroke by Doctor Holmes?"

"Just so, sir," answered Spigley, a twinkle in his eye.

CHAPTER IV.

In spite of the butler's reassurances, Tomlins' mistrust of England and the English strengthened as weeks rolled by. He croaked commercial ruin to a purblind nation, and was laughed at for his pains, while all the time the lesser fits of her industrial epilepsy—strikes, fêtes, and profiteering, peace, fêtes, food control, and strikes—like imps attendant on a witch, led him to Nemesis. It was a far journey, however.

Verily, a small spark kindleth a great passion! Had it not been for the bread strike, Letitia Rothwell and Arthur Mosely must have hung poles apart until the lonely end, employer and employee, respected and respectful, sadly separated by their mutual hesitations. For, though twin souls and now suspicious of the state, they were both too desperately shy to make any advances one to the other.

Custom dictated their formal morning greeting, followed by an embarrassed pause, and a direct plunge into the day's concerns; and so it might have gone on always but for the working of our theorem.

Of all the forces known to attract the sexes the strongest and the least resistible, if properly applied, is the force of gravitation. When a woman, irrespective of her age, temperament, complexion, or her supertax, has embraced her secretary and been embraced and clung to him for very life, she can never again be brought to regard him as a mere contrivance in the office routine.

The day after the escapade which we are about to relate, Letitia entered her sanctum by one door just as Mosely came in by the other. They were punctual persons and their advents almost sure to be concurrent. But the meeting this particular morn caused affinity to tremble on its tight rope. For habit is the cruelest enemy of love.

Had Miss Rothwell murmured a brief "How are you?" and fluttered to her desk, Arthur must have emulated her example, and all been lost.

She did nothing of the kind, however. For an instant they eyed each other with the avid doubt of felons. Shame drowned them. And then Letitia laughed. Her laugh alone invited sentiment. But the best of amorous laughs is as a tinkling cymbal to a blush. and aunt Letitia blushed-furiously. Whatever his Georgian record, Arthur proved man enough to rally to the queen's color. Flinging himself on his knees, he kissed her ringless hands and vowed devotion. A little archaic, perhaps, for the twentieth century. But the lady loved it. She had imagined herself wooed thus, and it suited her better than the "How about it, old scout?" of modern times. Born above self-consciousness, she forgot behavior and cast her heart adrift on the sweet emotional tide.

It was the second session of romance for each of them, and second sessions are apt to gain in facility what they lose in ardor. Neither chose to remember that during recent years Arthur had been making a fool of himself over a pretty girl. Nor did they, during the preamble, stop to note that its germination in a bread strike augured ill for domesticity.

"Dear me!" Letitia had exclaimed the previous morning, as she laid aside her illustrated paper in favor of congealing bacon. "Dear me, I am worried about Weg in this strike! The poor child may not be eating proper food!"

"Weg's more than able to look after herself," growled the colonel, rising.

"She's always had to do it, anyhow, poor lamb," murmured his sister, on hearing the door close.

Roselle snatched up the cudgels warmly.

"Well, I must say you are dreadfully unfair to father! What do you expect

him to do? We can't all invent stockings! You seem to forget he was educated at a public school."

"And the rest of us received no education to speak of in order that he might enjoy that unique benefit! Are we then likely to forget it?" Letitia modified her flash of sarcasm. "There's no good complaining, my dear. Nobody ever expected him to do anything useful outside of drill. But I draw a line at allowing him to discourage me from looking after my own niece. I believe I'll run up to town." She glanced at her wrist watch.

"You will have to order from the livery then," warned Roselle coldly. "Father has taken the car; and I want Beauty in half an hour for an all-day bridge at Mount Russet, and the pony is being shod."

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Her stable thus disposed of, Letitia made no objection to driving humbly in one of Draper's hacks. The contretemps had occurred before. It nearly always happened that when she wanted to go abroad she found nothing free to ride in; so she knew too well how long a job a government horse and a demobilized soldier could make of the station hill. There remained barely time to flutter into her office, drop an explanatory note for Mr. Mosely on her desk, and dress.

Letitia, never a regular tripper to London, had ventured out rarely during the war; and excitement held her in its clutch from the start. The train was full, tiresome, and hot. She had bought a third-class ticket in sheer absent-mindedness, and was too flustered to think of riding first-class and paying the difference. Not a trace of a taxi could be found at the arrival platform, which flustered her even more; so that when, after weary wanderings through subterranean tunnels, found herself suddenly ejected at Liverpool Street, the destination crashed on her as horrible, but not entirely sur-

prising—though she had booked for Holland Park. The network of London's mysterious tubes has unhinged many a resourceful mind.

Letitia bowed to fate and, taking her courage in both hands, for Weg's sake, shook the gloom of all undergrounds from her flat-heeled boots, and boarded the escalator. Once restored to open air and freedom, she might find a taxi, or at least, a bus.

Alas for human hope! When the longest moving stair in history had mounted aunt Letitia half its length it stopped, and apparently the goading of its keepers could not drive the monster on. Gravely she considered the reach above. It looked about a Sabbath day's journey, and Letitia had cause to remember forty-five inclement English winters when ambling up or downward, so she waited, following a sensible ex-A few messenger boys, aniample. mated by that frenzied keenness in their job, flashed past and vanished, but the bulk of the passengers stood still.

They waited expectantly, stolidly, despairingly. It was during the third phase that aunt Letitia sat down, and sat down, morever, out of plumb with her fellows, breaking line to the right side or the left side, or whatever side it is in that particular gangway which the British public are exhorted to forego.

Time passed. Trains arrived and departed. Passengers stranded themselves freshly on the lower levels and moved up in turn, without grumbling, to accommodate newer members. This was all very pleasant and sociable. Letitia collected her scattered wits and, beaming on the world from her exalted place, planned other benefactions for her humankind. How admirable it would be if all these busy, jaded men had but a little period of rest and contemplation in the middle of their strenuous mornings! She was wondering if everything could not be arrested everywhere during a ten-minute interval at, say, eleven thirty, when a too-impatient, busy soul below voted for action of some sort.

Instantly his idea swept the crowd. It even seemed to permeate the mechanism, for the escalator choose that moment of the forward surge to hustle into action and, as if defying competition, whirled madly onward at three times its normal pace, while the impetuous one, with a bundle of books under his arm, and a far-away look, intent on his own concerns, dashed through the gaping company and up the speeding stairs.

The whole concerted action broke over aunt Letitia like a tidal wave. The barrier at the top seemed hurling itself down on her, and the stranger below hurling himself up. Titans converging—the walls of the Red Sea about to swallow Egypt!

It has already been indicated that the poor lady was not so nimble as of yore. She managed to scramble to her feet, but the escalator flung her against its barrier, and the barrier hurled her back upon the man. He sacrificed his books to clasp her, as together they sailed into the crowd, or rather, the crowd was precipitated over them. A general concussion followed, with every soul for himself during thirty seconds.

Letitia sank to her knees, while her partner, clutching her firmly, danced a glassy jazz on the spirited floor, till, forced by expediency, he executed a superb pas seul and landed on terra firma still faithfully attached, for her chatelaine had caught his buttons. Dozens of helping hands shot out to grab her, but his were first.

Then the escalator stopped as suddenly as it had started. The Jabberwock lay heavily dead, and our beamish boy held aunt Letitia!

At this abrupt conclusion honest Englishmen looked unutterably sheepish; everybody hurried away nursing his betrayed emotions—everybody, that is,

but Arthur Mosely, who found himself clasping his genteel employer, with her hat very much over one ear and her outer skirt docked of its lower flouncing. What he said as he dusted her skirts need not be recorded. Letita treasures it in her memory, which goes to prove that he shouldered the blame, while she, too upset for politeness, cried "Monster!" and such obliquitous terms, glaring, however, at the vertebrate beast and not at her secretary.

The ice of his constraint once thoroughly shattered, Arthur took command with prompt efficiency.

"You'll have to order a new dress," were his first words, always pleasant to a woman's ears.

Letitia acquiesced and, there being moments in life when even the taxi system relents, he was soon handing her into a cab and giving an address on Sloane Street. It is noteworthy that a couple of hours later he was handing her out at Prince's, though nobody short of a trained sleuth would have taken her for the same person.

Losing one's clothes in so public a manner might reconcile any mind to abbreviated modes. Aunt Letitia had never been prudish, only unimproved; and for her size and immediate need French models were the sole salvation.

"A half a skirt is better than none," she remarked sagely. But she clung to her dove-gray and would have insisted on a wide hat had not Madame Dolini calmly ignored the suggestion. When they had hidden her flat hair under a toque, and hung a twenty-guinea ostrich feather tippet around her spare shouders, Letitia Rothwell looked not a day over thirty, the light of excitement in her eyes helping as much to that effect as the couleur de rose of madame's boudoir.

Robed, she regarded herself in fear and elation, mixed with a sense of fitness which dictated an order for highheeled shoes; and, when finally launched on the pavement, she clung to Arthur, feeling as conspicuous as a sandwich

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"A perfect gem of a shop! Everything one wants, and all so pretty! And they knew you, too!" she indiscreetly marveled.

"Used to," he laughed. "Mother as nearly as possible lived there before my father died—perhaps that is why he left her plus nothing." The andante mood followed. "I miss dear mother. I never realized till this morning how much I miss her. We had such good times going about together in the old days before the war."

"Did you ever think of adopting a mother?" asked Letitia.

Nothing short of cataclysm could have prompted her to such a speech ordinarily; but when a woman commences to live her life backward, rapidly as a pianola record being run off, progressing from ankle-length to kneelength skirts, and from staid, auntly concern to the childish recreations of embracing and being treated to new hair ribbons, mere words seem to matter less and less. Still, she was obliged to look into a window to cover her confusion; and the window, proving to be a corsetière's and displaying the lines of the perfect figure incased in mauve silk, heightened her blushes.

Watching her in sympathetic and admiring interest, subconsciously aware that they now stood in correct relation—male and female, protector and protected—the man was swiftly stabbed by the idea of his employer as unwed. Seeing Letitia Rothwell for the first time with normal vision, Arthur appreciated her as a prize unclaimed.

It was then he suggested Prince's.

"I have completely forgotten poor Weg!" Letitia cried penitently, when their waiter apologized for the absence of rolls. "And I came up only because I was afraid she needed looking after." "I was on my way to a commercial stationer's—a few more 'Reminiscences' on hand," Mosely volunteered. "When I found your note there was just time to pop back to the cottage for my bicycle and don a hat."

"We might have come up together."
"We shall go down together if you will permit me. Have you ordered the car for any particular train? I thought

of a concert or——"

Letitia, overcome by shyness, interrupted his invitation.

"Car? Oh, no, I had a hack. My brother took the car, and Roselle the carriage, and the pony was being shod." The explanation sprang as an apology for her family, in answer to his quick glance, but it sounded lame.

"I am afraid you allow them all to impose—that is, to be outrageously hoggish. You need looking after, yourself!"

A faint jingle heralded protesting motion from the most loyal little lady in the world. It seemed infinitely thrilling to Letitia to have anybody thinking about her convenience.

"Yes, do let us go home together," she said, fluttering to a safer topic. "I came up third—a horribly uncomfortable sort of mistake!" The memory made her wistful. "It must be very pleasant to be taken care of."

"Mutual pleasure—mutual benefit," he replied.

And so the duet ran on.

Arthur could not persuade Letitia to give Weg up for the selfish indulgence of a matinée, therefore he gallantly offered to see her through the boardinghouse chase. And she, still scared by her own reflection when glimpsed in a plate-glass window, thankfully accepted.

From Shepherd's Bush, her last address, they pursued the vagrant to Battersea Park, doubled on their own tracks, scoured Chelsea, and ran her to earth in a Putney bakeshop.

"And I feared you would not be

having enough to eat, child!" cried Letitia, falling on her neck.

"Priceless joke—what? Here I am at the source of supply, enjoying plenty if not peace. Give us a squint at you, aunt Let!"

In her offhand way she approved the transformation, pronouncing it: "Some class!"

Everybody around the place throbbed with the excitement of strike developments. Colonel Rothwell's daughter frankly identified herself with the job.

"It's a most nervy game, I tell you!

Last night the blighters stoned our front
shop while we labored in the bakery.

Just look in here at the windows!

You're welcome to tea, by the way, if
you can stand the shuttered gloom."

"A nasty business if you like, ma'am, this interfering with the nation's food supply!" The baker's tone crescendoed from respectful whimpers to the dignity of cool-faced—ruin. One felt sure he would have cared for nothing more than to lay hands on the body politic for five minutes. A born toady, turned reactionary under the stress of fear, he was still grateful to Weg for her help and ready to show it, so he made her friends welcome and hurried away, to return shortly bearing fresh bread and savory tea.

Then the latest creation from Madame Dolini's sat opposite a girl in a gingham apron with her sleeves rolled above her elbows, while the ex-secretary of a peace foundation opened a shade close-set against the mob, and old Ben Saltus, in his baker's cap, handed round the buns.

As Spigley says: "It's the war does it."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



THE STREAM

I FLOW, I flow, for Mother Earth
Shed many tears to bear me;
I flow, I flow, though at my birth
The rocks sought to ensuare me.

I flow, I flow, and at my flowing
The hills run down to guide me;
I flow, I flow, and at my growing
The flowers grow sweet beside me.

I flow, I flow, and as I roam
The little world allowed me,
I dance along till the sea foam
Comes with a kiss to shroud me.
JOHN MURRAY GIBBON.

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Six Feet or Over

By Louise Rice

Con 1300

Wanted, for the Hotel Riliton, a young woman of fine appearance, very strong, six feet or over preferred. Excellent remuneration, with maintenance. Must wear a uniform. Apply to Mr. Albin.

LUCY Dean allowed a frown to gather over her Grecian nose, as she thoughtfully pinched her rosebud lips with her tapering fingers. Her violet-blue eyes, shaded by long, curving lashes, misted with indecision. Her alabaster neck drooped upon her statuesque shoulders as she bent her head of waving gold over a bit of torn newspaper.

Lucy looked like that; she really did. She was an artist's dream of fair woman, a poet's vision of the perfect she; she was the fairest since the immortal Helen—or a lalapaloosa, according to your vocabulary—but Lucy was six feet and two inches in her bare feet and all the rest of her was in proportion.

Hence the frown over the Grecian nose. Hence a good many things.

Lucy's mother was one of those tiny, round, fairly perfect women who make the rest of the sex seem large and unfinished. Lucy's father had been the biggest and handsomest of a big and handsome English family, with traditions of a number of seven-footers in various branches of the family tree.

Lucy was really a pretty baby when she was born—something not seen every day—but she weighed a lot and nearly crushed her mother. She never got over her astonishment at the giant that she had brought into the world, but Lucy's father worshiped the child and was immensely proud of her. What was more, he did everything he could to make her a husky youngster.

She had never been taught to do a single useful thing, and her teachers, with every good word for her amiable disposition, had to acknowledge that she was not a prize pupil. So, when her father was killed in a too-optimistic endeavor to subdue a young horse, and when all his worldly goods thereupon took to themselves wings, in the strange way that they have, under such circumstances—why, there was a very serious problem for the woman and the girl to face.

Perhaps you do not believe that people with an established social standing, well bred, well educated, with some friends, can become tenement dwellers in a year or so, but they can. It is one of the easiest things in the world to do, as many a family has found out.

Lucy had conscientiously tried to prevent it, but her earning power was very small; and while her beauty would have given her work in almost any musical comedy, she shrank from such an exploitation of what she was beginning to feel was a great handicap.

In the exclusive and friendly social set in which she had grown up, she had rather gloried in her size and strength; but, on New York's East Side, when you could not so much as go to the butcher's without a train of loudly commenting urchins, and when passing truck drivers made audible remarks, and when the people in your house inquired why you didn't join the circus, matters looked very different.

Eventually, she secured the position of packer in the wholesale china house of McGarritty & McGarritty, and there she found a haven and friends.

After three years, she was still getting her original salary of twenty-five dollars a week; old McGarritty had rather testily refused her timid plea for a little more.

Lucy kicked a meditative foot against the box on which she had been sitting, then she lid off and moved down the long aisle of china-laden tables toward the desk where the junior partner was just getting down the last gulp from something in a thermos bottle. He smiled and hopped up on his flat-topped desk as Lucy approached.

When she paused beside him and looked directly at him with her violet eyes, set so serenely beneath her golden brown eyebrows, he looked down, for just a minute.

"Walter," she said, "here's something that I thought I'd look up. It's from yesterday's paper, but perhaps there would still be a chance. Not many girls would suit, I should fancy."

Walter followed her pointing finger and looked at her in amazement.

"I know, I know—" she conceded.
"But mother is not so well, Walter.
Your father thinks that I am not worth
any more than I'm getting, and there
are so few things that I know how to
do. I am not bright, you know. Anyway, this is the finest hotel in the city.
I might as well make up my mind, first
as last, that I can't go on hiding all my
life, if I am a freak. There's mother
to consider, you know."

"U-m-m-m." Walter, too, carefully corked the thermos bottle and minutely

inspected his thumbnail. He reflected that there would be about fifteen minutes more before the rest of the packing force returned from lunch. Then he flashed a look at her.

"Look here, Lucy!"
"Oh, Walter—don't!"

"You listen, just this once." "You promised that you wouldn't."

"Lucy, I've got to, If you were happy and everything were all right, I wouldn't say a word. I know it's mean of the old man not to raise your pay, but you know why he won't. He wants you in the family almost as much as I do, and he thinks that if things are not too easy for you, you may come. Why won't you, dear? If it's that stif English pride of yours, you just remember that it's I who am begging a favor. Think what a godsend two lovely women like you and your mother would be to two bachelors like father and me. We need you, I tell you!"

"When you put it that way, it's hard to refuse."

"Then it's yes, darling?"

"It's no, and you know it, Walter, How many times must we go over this thing? You know—"

"I know you're breaking my heart, all because of a few inches difference in our heights."

"A few inches! You're a whole head shorter, Walter, and little, besides."

Walter turned the color of an underdone brick.

"You stop!" he exploded. "I'm strong enough and big enough to give you a good beating. That's what you need!"

"Don't be absurd!"

"You've ruined your whole life worrying over this wretched business. Who cares if you are tall? Look how beautiful you are! And as for stronghuh, I'll show you who's strong! Don't you be absurd, dear. A man is always stronger than a woman, no matter if he isn't quite—quite—"

"You're a dear," Lucy said gently, "and I'm ashamed to tease you. But don't you see-I don't feel toward you as I could toward a man of my size? And I don't really believe that you are in love with me. It's just my looks. I've seen it happen ever since I was a child. It doesn't mean anything. I'll always be your friend, Walter, and you'll be just as happy, after a whileand you'll find some pretty little girl to love who won't make you look like a dwarf. I'll never marry. I don't think I'll ever find anybody-the right size-who'll really care for me. Mother says I'm a monstrosity, and I am. But I'm going to stop being ashamed of being big. Mother needs care, and I must get it for her. I don't know what father would say if he knew I'd shirked doing that. We always took care of mother together-father and I."

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Quite unabashed, she drew out her handkerchief and wiped her brimming eyes. She never could speak of her father without doing that, and she was never self-conscious over it. That was one of Lucy's charms, that utter simplicity of hers. But with those violet eyes all dewy and her firm lips trembling, she looked—oh, well, Walter McGarritty just groaned and snatched her to him. That is, he snatched part of her—above him and all but beyond the reach of his short arms there was a lot of Lucy not included in the embrace.

The girl was not disturbed. She knew Walter's good, pure heart, and so she laid a kind, sisterly hand on his shoulder and kissed the top of his head. Whereat the unfortunate Walter groaned again and sank into his chair.

Old McGarritty called Lucy into the office that night.

"I hear that you refused Walter again to-day," he stated.

Lucy looked surprised. "Oh, no," she said.

The old man's eyebrows went up in the manner which made him look like an inquisitive terrier. He was small, like his son, and the kind of a man who has affectionate nicknames applied to him by everybody.

"Then what did you do? The boy is all upset. Told me he was going to the devil and liked the idea. Said he wasn't coming down here again till he was good and ready. Not like Walter, that! Must have said something to him."

"I said I was going to look for a new position."

McGarritty's eyebrows almost disappeared under his fringe of gray hair. "Umph? Better pay?"

Lucy laid a friendly hand on the old man's shoulder. She had to bend considerably to do it and McGarritty patted her with his little, shriveled paw.

"Something worrying you, Lucy?"
"Mother is worrying me, sir. The doctor says that she is not so well. I think we will have to move from where we are, and so I must make some more money, somehow. I'm ashamed to have asked you for more, but really, I need it."

"I'm sorry, but-"

"Yes, sir, I understand. You won't give me any more because you want me to have to marry Walter."

McGarritty had the reputation of being a blunt man, but he blinked for a moment. Then he laughed.

"Well, that's about right, I guess. It's the easiest way out of your troubles, isn't it? And Walter's a nice boy. Soft-hearted, like his old man."

"You know why I will not, Mr. Mc-Garritty. I'm sure Walter has told you. Don't you understand? Why, I never have taken a walk with him except after dark. Even then, you ought to hear things people say as we go by. Together, we look——"

"Well, what's this job that you want to get?" McGarrity interrupted.

Lucy told him, and the old man was shocked. "My dear girl, it's really not

suitable. What will your mother say? Better marry Walter."

bucy's gentle eyes, without a spark of humor in them, beamed on him.

"Oh. Mr. McGarritty-"

"Couldn't do it, eh? Well, that's too bad. It's quite a blow. All things considered, I suppose it would be better if we were not to see you for a while. Perhaps Walter will find something nearer his size."

"Of course he will," said Lucy brightly. Privately, she did not think so. Walter had told her that he had never loved a girl before and never would again, and while she had always affected to believe that it was merely a case of infatuation, as she had said to him that day, she really thought it a very sad case of a lasting love, bound to go unrequited. Lucy had no more humor than a nice family cow.

The next morning Mr. Albin, with the bored air peculiar to the managers of hotels, had Lucy admitted to his office, but even he was quite bowled over by the vision which confronted him. He agreed, on the spot, to "maintenance" for the mother, also, and to a slight increase of that excellent remuneration already mentioned. For her own sake, Lucy would never have fought, but she had made up her grave young mind that she must take her father's place, and so she lost a good deal of her natural timidity.

The Hotel Riliton had Lucy's uniform of blue broadcloth made by a tailor who knew his business, who ornamented it with the most expensive of gold braid. A blue cap and yellow kid gloves went with the outfit, and when Lucy had fluffed out her golden hair a little and buttoned herself into those wonderful "lines," and put on the gloves and set a sweet, stereotyped smile upon her lips she was, in the parlance of the front office, "a knocker."

In reality, she was accoutered in coat of mail, helmet, shield, and a lance.

You could not see those habiliments, of course, but Lucy wore them, in spirit, for this was knight-errantry with a vengeance. She was supposed to be "captain of the waiters," but her real job was that of bouncer.

A year before, the Riliton, like a great many other big hotels, had had trouble with its men waiters, and had put in girls as a temporary shift, which shift had at once become, first a fad, and then the accepted thing, and the disgruntledmen took to various other jobs. The elevator girls and the bus girls and the hat-check girls and the "hops" had then ousted their male competitors, and the only person left, of the male persuasion, had been the big individual who looked like a field marshal.

Just before the insertion of the advertisement which had brought Lucy to her present occupation, this individual had gone on duty, one night, with an assortment of prohibited liquids within him, with disastrous results. So the hotel, looking for both safety and advertising, had had the thought to get a

woman for the place.

The advertising came promptly. Lucy found herself vying with the League of Nations for popularity. week of that nearly killed her; thereafter she almost learned to like it. She found out that what she mainly inspired was admiration, and that being a mild celebrity robbed her inches of their sting. She learned to watch for "queer customers" and to move gently on undesirable loungers in the fover and to put in a haughty and coldly inquiring appearance whenever anything untoward seemed about to happen. special care was the Palm Room, after ten: for it was there that the gayer spirits of the town chose to forgather.

She came to have a pleasant, semiprofessional circle of friends. Men and women, themselves famous figures in the city, made a point of greeting her cordially. Clubwomen, who knew who she was and remembered her father, spoke of her with respect. There grew up a little air of attention and pleasant homelikeness around the girl. She bloomed, and she would have been entirely happy if it had not been that not a word had arrived from Walter.

There, one night, she saw him at the door of the Palm Room. But, although he seemed to be looking in her direction he made no answer to her instinctively warm smile, and Lucy turned away, bitterness burning her throat with threatened tears. That Walter should be such a snob as not to want to acknowledge her! She walked among the palms, desperately trying to hold her mask upon her face, until she was paged by a small voice:

"Gemman in ladies' pah-lo' fa' yuh, Miss Dean."

Lucy went into the ladies' parlor with her sweetest, widest smile, holding out her hands impulsively. Walter caught them in his own and for a while could not speak. Then he said:

"Darling!"

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Lucy dimpled. It was a new accomplishment and made Walter entirely incoherent.

"Where have you been, Walter? I have missed you."

"I'm afraid I meant you to," said Walter with a grin.

"Oh, but that was not kind, was it?"

Walter had thought that even she would understand the jest.

"That was a joke," he told her, with his eyebrows going up in the humorous V which was like his father's.

"Oh," said Lucy, "if it was a joke, I am sure I would not understand it. I never do."

"You're looking wonderful!" Walter said, but some of the enthusiasm died out of his voice. Now that he could take his eyes away from her face, he found Lucy more stupendous than ever. "Can you stay, or mustn't I keep you?"

"I can stay only a few minutes. I am on duty."

"How's the job, dear?"

"Oh, it's lovely, Walter. I am so ashamed of myself for feeling shy so long. I understand now that people are not really unkind when they look at me. I've made such a lot of friends!"

My, but that girl was big! And not half so nice, with that assured air. Walter tried to keep on smiling and talking, but gloom was settling down steadily upon him.

Lucy had been talking away in quite an animated manner for her, but gradually she became conscious of the silent man opposite her.

"Aren't you well, Walter?" she asked.
"Oh, me? Oh, yes. Quite. Little tired, that's all."

"Do you want to go up and see mother?"

"Er-no, no-no, I guess not. I think I'll be going. Mustn't keep you, you know."

Lucy knew that something was wrong, but she found nothing to say, and, after a few minutes, Walter went along, saying that he was glad he had found her well.

"I always am," the bewildered girl replied.

He did not come back. Weeks rolled away and Lucy became as fixed a part of The Riliton as its sign, and her mother began to get better, and old McGarritty called twice a week instead of once, but there was not a whisper from Walter.

Then, one night late, two people came into the Palm Room. The girl was a tiny, dainty, airy little thing, not half an inch over five feet, but the boy who was her escort—well, if you want to have a perfect portrait of him, take up any high-class magazine and observe the square-jawed, fair-haired, large-eyed, blond young giant, in utterly impossible raiment, who will confront

you from the pages of any tailoring advertisement illustrated by our best artists. From the cleft in his chin to the inhumanly perfect fit of his collar, from his supernaturally long legs to his manicured fingers, you will see the man upon whom Lucy's startled eyes fixed themselves as he went past her, on duty at the door. She estimated that he must be almost six feet and three inches, in which she was all but fractionally correct. He was too well bred to stare, but several times Lucy encountered his level, respectful gaze. And the next night, he came alone.

In a week he had asked for an introduction to her mother, and in a month Mr. Albin was frantically imploring the eager representatives of the press to let the story lie "a little longer." For the blond young giant was the rich and entirely spotless young millionaire, T. Montgomery, and the reporters could hardly keep their itching hands off.

In fact, that magnificent young couple was something to thrill any one's heart. Both so fair, the man a little taller than the girl, both such perfect examples of lovely youth, both so well proportioned to each other, both so calmly content in each other's company!

The papers, anticipating a greater coup, consented to keep the story out, for a time, but society was not so discreet. With Lucy and T. Montgomery motoring together and dining ever so quietly in a distant corner of The Riliton, and going to the theater together, it was inevitable that there should be a great deal of talk.

Lucy's mother, who had reasons of her own for wanting Lucy to enter the McGarritty family, never failed to say what she could against her daughter's new flame.

"I do wish that Montgomery young man would not send so many flowers at once," she remarked one day. "You'd think we were keeping a shop. It's not in good taste." "Well, it may be bad taste, but at least it's not mean and unkind—and forgetful," Lucy replied.

And she went out with the suspicion of a tear in her eye. It had been a very long time since Walter's only visit to the hotel. Lucy's mother at once called a certain number.

"My, I'm sorry," said Walter's father, "but I'm afraid Walter has a new girl. Little bit of a thing. He's going out, socially, a great deal lately. He's heard about Montgomery and Lucy. Told me the other night, and said it seemed very suitable. That little girl he's going around with is like you. She's small and sweet; just right for short arms like Walter's and mine. Hey—don't cut me off, central!"

Lucy's little mother had slammed up the receiver.

She was not of the younger generation of females which counts tears a disgrace. She was frankly sniveling.

Walter went to the Palm Room of the Riliton that night, but he had with him the tiny little lady who had once favored T. Montgomery. She had a bit of tulle around her neck—she was the kind of a girl who can do that and she wore a little, childish hat, and her eyes—oh, my, the way she used her eyes in looking at Walter!

T. Montgomery was there, too, sharing a repast with Mr. Albin, and pouring misery into him by the air of proprietorship he assumed whenever Lucy's duties brought her near their table. Lucy, with the yellow gloves newly cleaned and wild golden hair and faintly flushed cheeks fresh from the tub, was looking more impossibly wonderful than ever. T. Montgomery started imperceptibly when Walter arrived, and Walter grew a little pale when he saw T. Montgomery stop Lucy and talk to her, and the girl and Lucy, whatever they felt, contrived to look perfectly at ease, in which art they were sisters in sex power.

Nothing might have happened if a large, beefy person, who bore palpable evidence of having been a recent violator of the Volstead act, had not come plunging into the room. 'No other word would properly describe his entrance. He glared around and then made straight for Walter's table.

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"'Lo, Cynthia," he remarked to Walter's companion, "whad' de you come—out with this—simp—for? Didn't I shay I'd be 'round to-night? C'mon."

"I will thank you to pass on, sir," said Walter in his deepest voice.

"Please sit down, George," whimpered Walter's companion.

"Are you—coming?" demanded the beefy person.

"This lady is with me, sir, and I'd thank you to pass on," said Walter.

The record of the next few minutes is somewhat blurred.

Witnesses, from various parts of the room, saw that:

Walter stood up.
Montgomery stood up.
Mr. Albin stood up.

Lucy moved quickly forward.

The beefy person aimed a blow at Walter's head, but missed,

Walter's companion screamed.

At this point the record is again clear. "Don't be a fool!" said Lucy to Walter's companion. It was not what she was supposed to say to distressed females. But she meant it.

"Behave yourself, George," said T. Montgomery, arriving.

"Look out, Lucy," said Walter, as the person named George tried to shake off her restraining hand.

"Oh, dear," said Walter's companion.

George, evidently misled as to the sex of his captor by the vague impression of a uniform, aimed a blow at her, but Lucy did something mysterious to him with her left hand, whereat he declared that he was being murdered and allowed himself to be led away.

Left together, Walter and the girl named Cynthia and T. Montgomery looked rather foolishly at each other.

"Er—how do you do?" said Walter.
"Timmie, this is Walter McGarritty," said Cyuthia, all aflutter.

"How de do?" said T. Montgomery. Cynthia sat down.

T. Montgomery sat down.

Walter half sat down, but his attention was attracted by some loud words on the part of the beefy George person, who seemed to be determined to come back and renew the argument.

Walter completed his half-risen attitude, balanced himself on his toes, and dodged among the palms. The argumentative gentleman had just tried to put in a blow on Lucy's classic nose.

"Here—here—stop that!" Walter ordered, as he bore down on the scene.

Lucy was just a shade too slow. George carried a punch, did George, and he contrived to deliver it upon the person of Walter where it would do the most good. Walter saw the justly celebrated crystal chandeliers of the Palm Room burst into a thousand glittering pieces, with a dull roar like that of Niagara, and then he fell asleep.

He came to in one of the pantries off the Palm Room. There was a wet handkerchief around his head, and somebody was bending over him.

Lucy's eyes were full of more than tears, and he cawed feebly like a happy young crow.

"Darling!" he cried, and kissed her with all his might. A most masculine kiss! Lucy blushed clear up to her violet eyes and Walter hopped gayly off to the floor. He had to hold his head, then, for a minute, but not even the sight of the shelf-laden walls waltzing solemnly around him could dim his ardor.

"Now who's my girl?" he demanded.

Some God-given instinct caused Lucy to sit still so that Walter could look up into her bashful eyes. They were so sweet and Lucy was so beautiful and Walter was so happy that he kissed her.

The pantry door opened upon a secluded side passage, and as Walter and Lucy drew apart, a bit dazed, they saw T, Montgomery and the girl named Cynthia go by, escorted by Mr. Albin.

"You just go out that door," the hotel man was saying, "and you will find yourselves in the street. You won't meet any one. Very sorry, I'm sure, that this little disturbance should have occurred."

"Don't mention it," said T. Montgom-

"Not at all," said the girl, Cynthia.

Any one with half an eye could see that T. Montgomery was dying to get her into a cab where he could kiss her.

They passed out of view. Mr. Albin gave one discreet glance into the pantry, and passed out of view, also. Wal-

ter brought his eyes back to the lovely, flushed face so near his own.

"I thought he had you, sure," he said, "and I was so mad I had a mind to let him get you."

"I thought, at first, I wanted him to, but—— And when you came in tonight—— She's so little and cute——"

Walter properly interpreted these broken parts of sentences.

"Poof!" he said. "Those little women are cats! You know I don't like cats." "You don't think I'm too big?"

"You're just right. My head's near your heart."

"Walter?"

"Dear?"

"If they're six feet or over you won't be mad?"

It was only a moment that Walter stared, uncomprehending. Then he put his strong little arms around Lucy's neck and nearly strangled her.



DEDICATORY

COULD not feel
That I had crowned
Your brow around
With flowers meet
Till at your feet
I laid this song,
Not fine, not strong,
And incomplete.

But from a heart
Too full to speak
Aptly, the weak
Words fall; ah, hear!
Or far or near,
Through good or ill,
For their plain will
Accept them, dear.

HENRY MARTYN HOYT.



The Mantle

By Robert Neville

CEEX 300

ACH morning for seven years, as he entered the offices of Andrew, Furth & Co., Higginson had stopped, just as he stopped this morning, for a fleeting glance at the door marked: "Treasurer." His was the proprietary interest with which an old man regards a home toward which he has worked all his life, and in which he plans to spend his last days. With this picture fresh in his mind, a vision to help him through the vicissitudes of the day, he would walk briskly, for a man of white hair and sixty years, to the long office where the accounts of the company were balanced. Hanging first his cane, and then his square derby and black frock coat, both frayed and tinged with green under the wear of brush and time, in his private cupboard, and, readjusting in his gray Ascot tie a horseshoe pin set with diamonds of an oldfashioned cutting, he would seat himself at the large desk which was his, as head of the bookkeeping department.

He had been a faithful servant. He had trodden the mill longest and most faithfully of any of the Andrew, Furth & Co. employees. For more than thirty years he had balanced books. His life had been wholly devoted to the house. Pleasure had never detracted from his work.

He had been a gay dog in his time. He had owned as fine a team of trotters as ever raced up Hudson Street on a Sunday morning; but he had restricted his sport to Sundays and to weekday evenings, when he sat with his cronies over a mug of ale amid the colored sporting prints which lined the Hollywood café, or enjoyed a bout at Burns' Gymnasium.

Paved streets and growing city congestion had gradually crowded his sport from the island, and, since the nineties all that remained of this life had been the horseshoe pin and a weekly beefsteak dinner in the Hollywood grill, with an occasional visit to Burns' to renew his youth at a set-to between youngsters.

He had had his pleasures, but they had been only as a glass of wine; the meat and bread of his existence lay in serving Andrew, Furth & Co.

Now, whenever visions of possible failure protruded themselves through his day-to-day content, he would bethink himself of the words of old Mr. Andrew, uttered seven years before.

"Higginson, you have been faithful," the feeble old Scotchman had declared. "You're not like this new generation which wants to be secretary or president of the house all in a few months. You have been a faithful servant. Continue so and your reward shall be fitting. It is not a small thing to be an official of a house like Andrew, Furth & Co."

Higginson had glowed with pride. Andrew, Furth & Co. had been his wife. To a man of his type it had been a pleasing wife, a lady of strait-laced, old-fashioned ideas and an impeccable reputation—a lady of the old school, whose life had continued over into a new generation of vulgar, unmoral women. It was a million-dollar house which traded with all the East, a house in which the old order of the founder had remained throughout four generations.

It would not be a small thing to be an official of such a house! Higginson had carefully taken stock of all the offices; and by such weighing and balancing he had concluded that his natural promotion would be to the office of treasurer, inasmuch as he had been called upon to fill the place of treasurer's assistant during sicknesses and vacations. And, therefore, the daily moment of anticipation before that sanctum.

This morning, as he turned from his moment of indulgence, to the door of the bookkeeping department, his feet came to sudden standstill. On the door of Mr. Andrew's office was pinned a rosette of crape.

He passed a trembling hand over his eyes. Then, still disbelieving, he stepped forward and touched the rosette.

Its reality turned him sick. As his whirling brain strove to adjust itself to the shock, the door before him opened and Mr. Harris, one of the vice presidents, came out.

Higginson laid a trembling hand on his arm.

"Is it true?" he asked in a whisper.

Mr. Harris nodded curtly. Andrew
had been a hard master for most men,
and Higginson alone in all the firm
loved as well as respected him.

Tears came into the age-paled eyes.
"What's the matter?" Mr. Harris
asked. "You look ill. You'd better
take a few days off!"

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Higginson drew himself up to the full height of his small body.

He take a day off? He had not taken a day off in his thirty years with the house! What would the office do without him? What would his department do without him? And—what would he do without the office?

"No, thank you," he said quite simply. "I'm afraid my department couldn't get along without me."

A slight smile crossed Mr. Harris'

"Very well. Do as you please," he said, and turned on his heel.

But Higginson caught him by the arm again, and, while the man looked at him impatiently, asked:

"When did it happen?"

"Last night."

"What-was it?"

"An act of Providence, I think." Higginson failed to see the double

meaning in the answer.

"Yes, he probably is better off," he

said. "When will the funeral be?"

"To-morrow—at his home."

"I suppose all the employees will go?" Mr. Harris smiled.

"I don't think so," he said. "Young Mr. Jock Andrew will have charge of the business now. He isn't sentimental and he won't consider that he needs us to mourn with him."

"How soon are the dead forgotten!" Higginson thought sadly. Then in a shaking voice he said:

"I should like to have the afternoon off."

"Better not!" Mr. Harris answered.
"Young Mr. Jock will think you can
serve the family better here than following after his father's casket."

Confused, his fine sensibilities bruised like those of a disillusioned child, his heart aching with grief, Higginson turned into his department. The room was waking with the first signs of activity. Men were hanging up their coats

and taking ledgers from the safes, preparatory to beginning the day's work.

A great void seemed to have been The motive power that born in him. had directed his life and controlled his emotions for thirty years was suddenly gone; and he was like a puppet with nobody to pull the strings.

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The figures before him meant noth-No significance seemed attached to the incoming folders of bills and credits. His life, the office, even his sight seemed confused. He noted sadly that the office force seemed to take the occasion as a matter of gossip instead of mourning.

The day passed with leaden feet, and night found him bowed under both spiritual and bodily-weakness, filled with a desire to get away by himself.

He ate no dinner, but took himself directly to the room down in Abingdon Square where he had lived for more than twenty years. He entered it dully, taking no notice of any article in his polyglot collection of curios, which, scattered about the heavy, age-darkened furniture, gave the room the atmosphere of home. The prints of the famous trotters of the eightics formed a line of blurred color about the wall. He undressed blindly, hanging up his clothes only from force of long practice, and sought oblivion in the huge, old-fashioned bed.

He slept heavily, drunkenly, from exhaustion of all his senses, and awoke in the morning, tired in both body and spirit. There seemed no urge for him to rise, unless it was the crushing desire to do something that would help him to forget.

He wanted to work. Yet, what was there in life to work for now? life had been in serving, not in working. Work was service with the spirit extracted from it.

He rose wearily, ate a tasteless breakfast of coffee and rolls, and with heavy feet made his way to the office. As he entered the building the office boy in the reception room added to his shock by whistling a popular tune. The whole tone of the office seemed different. It was frivolous, like that of all the upstart houses which had sprung up in the past generation, The soul had fled from the old-fashioned, impeccable lady, and she had become giddy at the very time that her years demanded of her the utmost dignity.

By force of habit Higginson glanced at the door of the treasurer's office, but he did not permit himself the usual glow of satisfaction. This was no time to dwell on personal joys and anticipations, but rather a period to reflect on the vanity of man, the unsubstantiality of those things in which he puts his faith. It was a period of mourning and

personal sorrow because of the loss of a friend and a light by which he had come to direct his life.

As his department awoke to the business of the day he felt there the same spirit of levity and slackness which he had encountered in the outer hall. The men seemed to have availed themselves of the situation to idle. They lacked the snap and alertness which had characterized the house. They worked leisurely and with less interest. It was apparent, even, in the first two arrivals. They stopped for a chat as they took their ledgers from the safe.

The morning, like the previous day, dissolved itself into a confusing, sick-

ening dragging of time.

Higginson had hesitated only a moment in deciding whether he should disobey orders and attend the funeralmore a moment of wonder and righteous indignation than of wavering. When noon came he turned the department over to his secretary, took his hat and cane, and presented himself at Mr. Harris' office.

"I shall be away for the afternoon," he said in a low, determined voice.

Their eyes met. Mr. Harris started

to speak, but checked himself. After a moment he answered:

"Very well."

After he had been walking several minutes, Higginson realized that he was weak from lack of food. He stopped at a small restaurant.

At the Andrew home he was received coldly by servants who seemed to reflect mone of the sadness of the occasion. He was guided through several elaborately furnished rooms, which made him think again of the vanity of men, and given a chair in the extreme rear of a darkened room. Some dozen other people were seated ahead of him, and as his eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness he saw under a bank of flowers the casket. His eyes smarted with tears.

Presently a group of people whom he knew to be the family, entered, and a minister commenced to read the service. As the work of the man whose life had been cut short was eulogized, Higginson remembered bitterly the new atmosphere of the office which told of the overthrow of the work which his master had built up.

Higginson swallowed. He saw the old man as he had first seen him when he was in the prime of his life. Then his mind traced the picture rapidly to the day when Mr. Andrew had commended his service. He suddenly was no longer without desire to work. Pride swelled in his heart. He could serve as never before by helping to maintain the old order. The mantle had fallen on his shoulders.

The gray, spiritless feeling left him, and an inward surge of activity, hallowed by his sorrow, took its place. He was able to hold his shoulders straight and his head high again. As the minister pronounced the benediction and the pallbearers slowly bore the casket out, the expression of sadness left Higginson's face, and the spirit of his new task lighted it.

He left the house with the firm, unfaltering step of a man whose life is dedicated to a purpose. He walked the three miles to his room briskly, striking the sidewalk absent-mindedly with his cane as he planned how he might best serve his master. It was now Andrew, Furth & Co., instead of Mr. Andrew, that owned his honor. Never must the old order, the old standards of the house, be slackened.

Mr. Jock would need help now. Undoubtedly old Mr. Andrew had mentioned his faithful service to him. He would probably come to him outright for assistance. If for any reason the young man should fail to do this, he could tactfully offer his services, and by judicious play instill him with the old spirit of the house. In the end, somehow, he would accomplish his purpose.

He weighed and balanced, first, every man in his own department, sifting the wheat from the chaff, deciding whose interests were the house's interests; then, he slowly went over the various officials, deciding which ones he would have to fight, and which stood for the old order: and gradually he went over all the employees of other departments, weighing and sifting them. There were too many young people for one thing; not enough old ones. There lay the germ of trou-Young people thought only of themselves and looked only for self-advancement. Only in settled people could be found servants whose joy lay in the advancement of the cause.

In a few days Mr. Jock would begin to get the lines of his business straightened and in control. The solution was as plain now as his duty. The smallest doubt of the perfect execution of his plans had faded. His advice would be asked, and he would proceed to steer the policy of the house as the old master would have wished.

His step became as buoyant as a boy's, his eyes twinkled, with anticipation, and, as he smiled, his small, white beard and mustaches seemed to bristle with youth. He relished his evening meal, and all night he dreamed of the future glory and prosperity of the house of Andrew, Furth & Co.

The next morning he was at the office a quarter of an hour earlier than his usual time of arrival. He smiled as he glanced at the door of the treasurer's office. Upon reaching his desk, he plunged immediately into the previous day's work, which he felt must necessarily be tangled, not having been directed by him. He tried to be tolerant with his men and bide his time as the spirit of laxness showed in frequent conversations. He would soon be able to eradicate this evil from the office.

A boy came to his desk whistling. He turned upon him with a frown.

"Mr. Andrew wants to see you in his office," the lad said.

Higginson's heart leaped, sending a glow to his face. It had come even sooner than he had anticipated. Everything comes to him who waits, provided he serves while he waits. He was not elated so much by the reward for what he had done as by the opportunity it offered for him to do more.

He adjusted the diamond scarfpin in his tie. Then, striving to conceal the satisfaction he felt, but with it still showing in his twinkling eyes and proud carriage, he stepped into the office of his new master.

Mr. Jock Andrew was a heavy young man with a full red face and a defiant air. At college he had been an athlete, and during the two years since graduation he had attained a name as a man about town.

"Good morning, Higginson," he said shortly. He made no motion toward the chair beside his desk, and Higginson continued to stand before him, his hands clasped behind his back. "I find myself suddenly in the position of having to take charge and run a large busi-

ness," he continued. "There has to be a decided change of policy—"

"I heartily agree with you," Higginson interpolated warmly. "I am pleased to be of service to you!"

"I have this business to run," Andrew continued hurriedly, his face growing even redder, "and there's only one way I can do it. That's my way. I have to have men who will work my way."

"I have been thinking a great deal about that very question," Higginson said, smiling with satisfaction. "I had worked out a plan to submit to you in case you should ask my advice. There are too many young people—"

Young Andrew's face turned purple, and for a moment it seemed that he would choke. Higginson stopped in wonder.

"The house has gone to hell!" the young man cried. "It's so old-fashioned that it creaks. It's a laughing-stock among modern business men."

Higginson gasped. Could he believe his ears? Could this man, the son of his father, be impugning the honor and worth of his father's work in this sacrilegious manner? He grew white with indignation,

"Sir," he interrupted with trembling voice. But Andrew paid no heed.

"It's an old curiosity shop, a junk pile, an antique! What it has to have is new blood! I have decided to replace all the men over forty with young men. You will draw the pension my father designated for you. You may retire on Saturday." He hesitated for a moment. "I thank you in the name of the family for your long service. Good morning!"

The fire of indignation which had flared up at the slur on the honor of the house and the work of his old master had been snuffed out by this further, more pertinent, announcement. A mist gathered before his eyes, and for a moment he seemed to float in it. His hands went forward and clutched the edge of

the desk. He became conscious of innumerable separate office noises which more than a score of years before had lost their identity.

He turned and went blindly out.

Discharged! And for his service to this man's father! Thrown out as if he had failed the house instead of served it loyally for thirty years. Discharged! Or, rather, discarded!

His courage was suddenly gone. His belief in himself was torn down. At the moment he had felt his greatest happiness in a belief that he could give his best service, he had been thrown into the discard. He was old, used up.

He wanted to die, to get away from

himself and the world.

As time passed there came to him a less personal, but even more painful view of his calamity. His mission, the vow that he had made his dead master at the funeral, could never be fulfilled.

The old leaden pain of emptiness, of spiritual weariness returned to intensify his acute personal suffering. Service, the last thing in life, had been taken from him; and before it had already gone courage and self-confidence. His suffering deadened his nerves; and that alone made it possible for him to get through the awful day ahead. His body moved automatically, while his mind wandered far away, suffering with a hollow sickness.

After the office closed he went directly to his home. For hours he paced his room. Then grief found an outlet in great sobs which left him in a state of tingling numbness. Then he slept the sleep which Nature provides when she has been harder on us than we can bear. From seven in the evening till seven the next morning he slept like one dead.

He awoke in what at first seemed a strange world. His mind was placid, but his nerves still ached. A moment of thought, and he remembered with an inward sinking the events of the day before. He arose instantly, because he knew it was worse to lie thinking than to be up and about.

His feeling gradually became less general and hysterical, and dissolved into an acute sorrow which made him want constantly to weep. Instead of wishing to be away from the scene of his failure and hurt, he grew to cherish it. Each day the office became more and more a place of sentiment, like an old homestead to which is attached all the beautiful memories of life. Instead of neglecting it, he performed his work with The week, ina loving exactitude. stead of dragging into an exhausting period of time, passed with wings. And suddenly he was dispossessed from life. it seemed. He was a man in a strange world. He was an old man whose heloved wife had died, leaving him to complete the journey of life alone.

He knew of nothing to do: he wanted to do nothing. But he knew that he must occupy himself in order both to lighten his mind and to secure the little luxuries he craved. The pension left him for his faithful service would pay for his room and food. The last sparks of the instincts bespoken by the horseshoe pin demanded a slight indulgence still. His life had been in service, not in leading or standing alone, so he had developed no inward resources, but depended on bought pleasures.

With his soul rebelling, but with his body and reason impelling him onward, he started out early Monday morning in search of employment. His loyalty protested against his going to rival firms; but he knew only one business, and only with these houses could he hope to make connections.

"Why did you leave your last position?" he was asked at each place he

applied.

"We're sorry," they invariably answered his truthful reply, "but we have always made a practice of employing much younger men than Andrew, Furth & Co.'

The end of the first day found him at a spiritual ebb. He was weary with the weariness which comes only with the continued pursuit of a futile search.

Passing days served somewhat to inure him to the bitterness born of his state, though never to reconcile him to the fact of its being. His presence and inquiry before a prospective job became less and less assured. He expected a negative answer, and invited it.

The end of a month found him still jobless—an old man from whose step had gone the youthfulness, from whose shoulders had gone the pride, and from whose eyes had gone the fire. Gradually his search had slackened till, some days, he scarcely left the house. He had reached a stage bordering on moral disintegration. If he had been younger, he would have turned to the worst forms of dissipation; but in his age there was nothing for him but dry rot.

He had saved no money because he was one who served, who was cared for by his master. It had never occurred to him that he would not always thus be cared for. He found himself at the end of his resources, assured a bed and board, but without means to provide himself with little pleasures. This became a matter of great importance at this time of low moral force. The sudden privation of the brand of cigars he had smoked for thirty-odd years, of his weekly beefsteak dinner at the Hollywood, and his occasional visit to Burns' became a mountainous loss. It took all that he had left in his shattered life. The gold had been taken first from the structure; and now he was being robbed of the alloy. It seemed to him that the structure could not stand.

It forced him in desperation to renew the search. He sought work wildly, but vainly. He could not live on in this fashion, he told himself. He would far rather die. But he really did not consider death seriously. He was a follower, one whose life is cut out for him. He lived it blindly and, nothing preventing, happily, as he served blindly and happily. So, instead of dying, he went tramping on in his search.

One morning, when it seemed that the fire of hope had died, and even the ashes had been blown away, he found himself suddenly in front of Andrew, Furth & Co. A thrill passed through his tired soul. A light born of visions of his former life came into his aged eyes as he stared at the large, old-fashioned building. It was like coming suddenly back to the scenes of child-hood after a life spent in futile wandering.

He was possessed of a desire to go in, to see the old offices, his old department, and though he did not know it, to see the door marked "Treasurer." It was home. He forgot that he was a failure. He forgot that he had been expelled from it. It was like a mother who made him forget everything but her.

Trembling, he went up the steps. How deeply they were worn! He and Mr. Andrew had helped wear them thus. There was the heavy, mounted door, the old, high-ceilinged corridor. And—was he seeing things?—was this a dream?—there was a girl at the desk in the reception room! What had happened to the house?

His heart fluttering, he passed quickly through the room, and on down the corridor. He trembled as his eyes rested on the door marked: "Treasurer," and as he saw his own department just ahead.

Could it be a dream? Could all these horrible weeks have been a dream from which he was just awakening? Was he on his way to work? Was he still a trusted employee of Andrew, Furth & Co.?

A shrill voice behind him brought him out of the daydream in which he had fancied himself awakening from a nightmare. He turned sharply and saw at his elbow the blond girl he had noted in the reception room.

"Whom do you wish to see?" she demanded.

"Why, I have worked here for thirty years," he said in a shaky voice. "I only wanted to see the place."

"You can't go in here unless you have

business," she said.

He rubbed his hands together nervously. The girl faded into a blur as he

stared at her.

Not go in! He, Higginson, who had served longer than any one else in the house, whom old Mr. Andrew had complimented before all the others on his lovalty and service, barred from even looking at the place where he had served? It was not a dream, but stark reality.

-He put a trembling hand to his moist forehead.

"Tell Mr. Andrew that Higginson wants to see him," he said in a voice which he did not recognize as his own.

He had not doubted that he would be seen, but he was surprised when, a minute later, he was ushered into the office.

Young Andrew looked as heavy and red-faced as ever, but his expression was less defiant than on the occasion of their last meeting. Alt was as if, having nothing to do that he was ashamed of, he was less on the defensive.

"Good afternoon, Higginson," he said in a patronizing tone. "You wanted

to see me?"

"Yes, sir," Higginson said eagerly, and suddenly he poured out his soul to "Mr. Jock, I can't stay the young man. away!" he cried. "This building has become like a home. You can't take an old man and dispossess him from the home he has always lived in, and expect him to find any place that is livable after that." His quavering voice rose to a high pitch of pleading. "Can't you find something for me to do? Anything-anything! There must be something that an old man can do as well as

a young one, especially when he know the business as I do."

He leaned forward with his hands on the desk, his eager eyes searching the eves of the man before him.

Suddenly, into young Andrew's face again crept the look of defiance. At the darkening expression Higginson drew back. His fire died. He was like a man of ashes.

"Higginson," young Andrew said suddenly, "every place is filled but one, That one isn't desirable. I shouldn't have offered it to you if you hadn't asked. You said any place! I've got to replace that damned woman out there in

the reception room! I put her there because a boy isn't efficient. She's driving away customers. She's too smart, The job needs a man of patience and tact. It's something an elderly man could do very well."

Higginson stared at him, dazed, incredulous. He, an office boy? He, the oldest employee of Andrew, Furth & Co., to carry in cards? There was no resentment in his consideration of the offer, only surprise, and a sort of inability to grasp it.

A sharp "Well?" brought him back to the importance of the situation.

It was a place under the roof of his old home, even though it was far back under the eaves. He was old. For weeks everybody had impressed his age and worthlessness upon him. There was no place else in the world for him. And this, besides giving him a chair in the place of his desire, would give him the means of the few luxuries which he had come to crave more than ever before under the sorrow which had fallen upon him.

"Thank you, sir, you are very kind," he said gratefully. "When can I start

to work?"

"To-morrow morning!" Andrew's voice was gruff and his look forbidding, and Higginson hurried from the office in fear lest the offer be withdrawn.

If he had aged twenty years in the past few weeks, he had grown ten years younger in the last few minutes. His step was lighter than it had been since the morning of his dismissal. His shoulders were again erect, his head high, and his eyes bright. Again a spark of the spirit bespoken by the diamond pin glowed in him. He was no longer a discarded, worn-out automaton. He was a trusted employee of Andrew, Furth & Co. He went home and dressed in his best, and made it an evening of celebration amid the pictures in the Hollwood grill.

In his weeks of disappointing and futile search for work, there being no necessity for him to rise, he had gradually contracted the habit of lying late. The next morning, however, found him carefully dressed, and seated in the reception room of Andrew, Furth & Co. before the hands of the clock reached

eight-thirty.

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He settled into the chair behind the reception-room desk with the complacent and luxurious comfort with which he might have settled into a long-vacant easy-chair before a fireplace in the evening. Through such misery had his soul traveled before finding even this degree of comfort that he took whole-souled possession of it, and felt no embarrassment in the anticipation of greeting his fellow employees.

As his old friends passed through the room he bowed to them with dignity, a feeling of content settling on his soul. Their surprised and questioning looks

caused him no perturbation.

At noon, however, his poise was disturbed by the attitude of two of the bookkeepers from his old department, with whom he had gone to luncheon.

"I wouldn't stand it a minute!" one declared. "I'd tell that boiled-faced Scotchman just where he got off!"

"But, you see, I'm only doing it because I'm lonesome," Higginson protested. "He didn't ask me to come to

work. I asked him, because I had got used to the office and found that I could not enjoy myself being idle."

"Well, all I can say," the other friend declared, "is that if I were you, I'd never want to see the place again after the trick they turned on you. I'd hate it so that I'd walk a mile to keep from passing the building."

This was lese-majesté. It shocked

Higginson.

"It was very kind of Mr. Andrew to make the place for me," he replied with quiet assurance. "After all, you

know, it is his shop."

"Kind—my eye!" the man replied.
"It's none of our business, however, if you want to have insults added to your injuries. If you want to be humiliated before all the people who used to work under you, it's your own funeral. You ought to be an official of the company, I think. They owe you a living at least. If I were you, I'd see that I got it by hook or crook." There was a sinister quality in the man's voice.

All that afternoon, in an effort to kill the germ which had been planted in his mind, Higginson repeated to himself:

"Isn't it nice to be back! How lucky I am!"

He thought, too, of the days spent wandering futilely from firm to firm, and shuddered inwardly at the memory.

By throwing such light on his position he was able to eliminate almost the shadow which his friends had cast upon his new happiness. His friends, however, not having been thrown out of work, not having been made to tramp the streets week after week in a futile search for employment, and not having been made to acknowledge themselves failures, could not see the value of the job to him. They kept up a constant fire of indignation when they were with him, and when he would protest they would turn to innuendoes.

Under this constant incentive to discontent the reading of his creed gradually came to fail in its purpose. He began to doubt his good fortune and the benevolence of his master; and finally he commenced to question rather than affirm.

"Am I so lucky after all?" he would ask himself.

He would walk down the corridor and gaze at the door marked "Treasurer," and a bitter smile would creep over his face. Would one call that luck—to be promised the office of treasurer, and suddenly be thrown down to the lowest job in the firm—office boy? This, the reward of thirty years' service, of giving the prime of his life? Was he so lucky, after all? Wasn't his friend, perhaps, right in saying that he should never want to see the place again? Wasn't he, himself, sentimental? Why did he want to see the scene of such injustice as had befallen him here?

He had gradually come to read either pity or ridicule into the greetings of the other employees. He came to greet some stiffly. Others he entirely ignored. He came to dread the hours of nine, twelve, one, and five o'clock, when he was subjected to these double-meaning salutations. He came to dread arriving at the office. He was hurt; for he had never stood alone, but had always depended on others. He could not work out his own problem for its true value. Instead, his instinct was to crawl away by himself like a wounded animal.

The same moment that he thought of getting away from the place, of quitting, the thought of his loneliness in the world and of the privation of his small luxuries, surged over him, and with a shiver of dread he would banish the idea.

There seemed nothing left to him but to bear the humiliation, to content himself with a small bone like an old dog. Nevertheless, the wound grew more painful each day. Hate, deep, malignant, and unreasoning, took root in the sore. A month, and he hated Andrew, Furth & Co. with all the hate which can

grow from scorned love. He hated everybody and everything connected with it. He hated the smiling faces about him, the building, the reception room, particularly.

He no longer tried to find good fortune in his situation. He did not recite the creed he had built. His mind became darkened with creatures of resentment and despair. His shoulders slumped and his head bowed; but a bright glow lighted his eyes, and he began to mutter to himself.

He, an office boy earning fifteen dollars a week! And he should be the treasurer at fifteen thousand a year! Be thankful? For what? Andrew, Furth & Co. were his debtors, not he theirs! He had given them faithful service during practically every day of his life which was of commercial value. They owed him comfort and care—thousands of dollars' worth of it! They owed him something which money could not buy—honor and respect!

One morning, as he took the daily papers from the newsboy for distribution in the offices of the officials, his eve caught a large headline: "Police Are Baffled by Burglary Epidemic." And in a smaller headline beneath was epitomized a reported excoriation of city officials for laxity which permitted daily robberies of New York business houses. He read the headlines with passing interest, then distributed the papers. With no recognized connection between it and the news he had read, and so gradually that at first he was not conscious of its presence, an idea took root in his brain. When it first presented itself to him in conscious form it shocked even his embittered mind.

"Why don't you take what belongs to you?" it demanded.

He put it out of his mind as he would have driven away a poisonous insect. But it came back again.

"You have paid the piper," it taunted him. "Why don't you dance?"

He fought it madly. But it had set its mark upon him, and its poison was in his blood. He must get away from the building, from these people who taunted him; he must get away from this room or he would go mad. He had given all his best years to Andrew, Furth & Co., and they owed him a peaceable old age. Even a horse was given that much!

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"You have the keys to the office," came the quiet suggestion. "You learned the combination of the safe when you filled the place of the treasurer's assistant while he was on vacation. You didn't have a vacation, then; you were working in the treasurer's office—learning. This knowledge was dearly bought. Make it of some value now!"

Gradually he came to listen to the voice in fascination. His horror of it dimmed, and finally faded, and he commenced turning its suggestion over in his mind, studying its practicability.

Under the goad of the mocking salutations and the long hours in the hated room by himself, he at last determined, one morning, that he would take what was due him. His face set in an expression which gave a downward cast to his jaws like those of a bulldog. A gleam of craftiness crept into his eyes. He paced the room restlessly, planning, waiting, trying to speed time by his own efforts.

He must move carefully, plan every step ahead, and execute skillfully in order to be sure that nothing would miscarry. As discovery and arrest, disgrace and the penalty of the law came into his thoughts, he shook with sudden fear, and perspiration started from his forehead. He ran a trembling hand about his collar to loosen it from his perspiring throat. Then he laughed nervously at his fear. Who could know? Who could suspect him? His very service which they had capitalized and let go unrewarded was his safe con-

duct through any suspicion which might center in the office.

At a quarter past five, when practically every one had departed, he took his hat and cane and stepped into the manager's office. Here he inquired if he were needed further that evening and, with his alibi thus established, he bade the manager good night and passed back into the reception room. After looking carefully about and assuring himself that no one could observe him, he quickly secreted himself in a large closet used for stationery supplies.

In his pocket he could hear his watch ticking away the seconds. Outside in the reception room he heard the company officials go home, one by one. Then, with a start, he heard the cleaning people come in. He had forgotten them, and suddenly he was again in a panic of fear. He crouched far back into a corner behind some supplies and waited with nerves tense. Minutes seemed hours. Fully sixty of them passed; then he heard the women go chattering by on their way out.

He relaxed weakly and cleared his throat. Several hours must pass before it was safe to work. He must have darkness as a cover to his deed, and darkness to flee into when it was done. He settled himself into as comfortable a position as possible, and gradually fell into a light doze which was disturbed by doubt and fear.

He awoke with a start, every muscle tense. From somewhere a gnawing sound reached him. He listened intently. Then he smiled. What better assurance of safety could he ask than rats at work? He decided that it must be very late, and he reproved himself for sleeping. What if the rats had not awakened him, and he had been found here in the morning?

Silently he crept from his hiding place and along the corridor to the treasurer's office. Under his arm he bore several packages of small pads which he had found in the closet. They would fit very nicely in the place of the certificates and bonds he would take.

Drawing on a pair of gloves which he had had the presence of mind to bring along, he unlocked the door. A moment he stood listening. The blood pounded madly in his temples. With a sickening sensation he thought of the incongruity of his long anticipated entrance to this office to claim his reward. It was for this that he had paused in pleasant contemplation before the office each morning for years!

His mouth set again in the bulldog expression. He closed the door behind him, and quickly groped his way around the furniture to the cashier's office. He unlocked this door and the safe was before him.

The blood seemed each moment to pound more madly through his head. It seemed to create fearsome sounds in the velvety darkness. He slunk, rather than walked, the half dozen steps to the safe. His trembling hands located the knob. In the darkness, he could not see the dial, even with his face pressed almost against it. For a moment he despaired. Then, impelled by necessity born of desperation, he struck a match, and with feverish haste made the turn of the combination while the match burned to his finger tips.

With a sigh of relief he heard the tumblers fall. He clutched the handle of the great door with both hands and, putting all his strength into the effort, pulled it open. He had to pause to get the arrangement of the safe clearly in his mind. This compartment contained cash, this one bonds! The days put in about this office, when the treasurer's assistant was on his vacation, had not been so entirely wasted as he had sometimes thought of late. He smiled grimly, and stripped both compartments. When he had finished he put the packages of pads in the place of the bundles which now lay in the crook of his arm. Then

he swung the safe door shut, and twirled the knob.

The work was done! He straightened up and heaved a sigh of relief. The silence of the room suddenly seized hold of him. He heard his own breathing. He wanted to get away.

Suddenly a chill of fear raced down his spine. Across the silence came the shrill, metallic squeak of door hinges. His breath caught in his throat, his heart seemed to stop. He had been watched, caught like a rat in a trap! The police! Prison! Punishment! Oh, he had known it all the time!

Swiftly, but silently, he crept beneath the cashier's desk.

Further sounds came from the outer office; then the cashier's door swung open. The blood beat wildly in his temples. A subconscious animal sense of self-protection held him rigid before a desire to shrink farther back in his lair; but his consciousness seemed to shrink farther back into his body. To his throbbing senses the room seemed alternately to contract and expand about him.

Would they find him?

A round spot of light flashed on the rug before him. He crouched farther back beneath the desk. The spot of light wavered a moment, jumped to the wall, disappeared entirely, then reappeared. Limp, paralyzed, Higginson waited for it to find him. But suddenly it cut the knob of the safe out of the darkness, and remained stationary.

"Come on-get to work!" some one whispered.

Two men appeared in the circle. Their faces were covered with handker-chiefs, their collars were turned up about their ears. A wave of relief like a breath of cool air swept Higginson. It was not the authorities. He wanted suddenly to weep. Silently, but rapidly, the men set to work on the safe. In the stillness of the room Higginson

could hear the twirl of the knob. Then the great door swung open.

Fascinated, Higginson leaned forward to watch. His head struck the desk. The sound was slight, but to Higginson it seemed like the falling of the walls. There was a curse and the room was plunged into darkness. Then silence.

Higginson lay rigid. What would happen? He imagined himself dragged from beneath the desk, struck down, with warm blood flowing from him. He imagined himself dead. It was morning, and all the officials were gathered about with horror-stricken faces, regarding a stark, sprawling body, splotched with dull red.

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An age seemed to have passed; then came a tense whisper:

"Quick! Those bundles! Don't show that light!"

The safe door clanged shut. Silence closed in again on the room, and Higginson lay in a state of mental and physical collapse.

With a start he realized the situation. The house had been robbed! A terrible anger seized him—an anger as great and righteous as he had known when he had seen the house imperiled by modern business methods.

He was again Higginson, the oldest employee of Andrew, Furth & Co. The mantle was on his shoulders. The house was in danger. He must save it. The credit of the firm might be hanging in the balance. The whole structure of the business might be in peril. Something must be done—and he must do it!

He leaped from under the desk. He jerked the door of the treasurer's office open, and was out in the corridor on the trail of the burglars when he suddenly came to a halt.

A sigh of relief escaped him. He smiled, and his hands adjusted the horseshoe pin in his gray Ascot tie. He had almost forgotten—the money was

safe. He had saved it! It was under the cashier's desk.

With brisk step he regained the cashier's office, and found the money. His old hands pressed it joyously.

If he had not taken the money—if he hadn't been there ahead of them, the firm would have been robbed.

The thought bore another. He had merely taken what would have been taken in any event. Wasn't it better for him to have it than these burglars?

It was his, he told himself. He had worked thirty years for it. The firm owed it to him. He had given them all his productive life. Now that he was no longer able to produce and to support himself, they should support him. If he hadn't taken it, these burglars, who had never worked, and who were in no way deserving, would have had it. They had provided his alibi! There was no danger now!

Then he bethought himself further, and wavered.

He smiled. He had worn the mantle too long to discard it thus easily. It had become a part of him. True, he had never been allowed to function in it; but that only made this opportunity to do so the more precious. He remembered the funeral of Mr. Andrew, and his yows to him. Service to the cause was the meat and bread of his life. He was, first of all, Higginson, the oldest employee of Andrew, Furth & Co. To him had fallen the honor and joy of saving the house! And it was in his discarded old age-after he had been told that he was too old to serve-that he was able to render his greatest service.

Quickly he opened the door of the safe and put the bundles back in their proper compartments. With a thrill of pride he passed his hands over the neat piles.

Then he closed the safe and, carefully locking the office doors behind him, made his way out of the building.



Philanderer's Progress

By Paul Hervey Fox

VI.-Rosalie and Sylvia

THE ancient day coach, which for the last three hours had rattled Steven Trayle over a rocky roadbed, drew up with a final, sulphurous gasp. The station, forlorn and obscure, fronted a dark reach of mountains. The silence of late afternoon hung over the woods, and a scent of evergreens was freshening after the stale smells of the train.

A public hack wheezed up the hill with Steven and his baggage aboard, and he looked about him, drank in the sweet air, and thought: "So this is where Ted Forrest lives!"

He chuckled to himself, remembering once more the good old days, the brave days of his youth, which would never come again. He had been seventeen then, and Ted—Ted must have been about nineteen. What scrapes they had got into! What deviltries they had conceived, planned, and executed! The time Ted had dared him to take off his shoes in church, and the acceptance of the dare! The time they had walked into a saloon together and boldly demanded beer, just so, and their disappointment at not becoming immediately drunk!

He remembered how Ted's mother had died suddenly one hushed, winter morning, and how the track of her footprints, stamped in the snow on a patch of ground before the old New York house, had remained long after she, poor lady, was lying in a grave. A

thousand, thronging incidents, snatches of talk, gulps of hysteric laughter, fears, distresses, and happy ardors, filled Steven's mind. It was only with Ted Forrest that he shared these memories.

And Ted had written him an insolent, indifferent letter which saved his pride, yet gave a pledge of affection between the lines. Ted had married early, had gone abroad to live in Italy, and the disturbances of the war had driven him temporarily home again. It was strange that they had not met before this. Perhaps each had been afraid that the sundering years had destroyed in the other the illusions of the past. It was over a decade since they had clasped hands. It was a long time.

Ted Forrest's home lifted its face on a point above the serene waters of the lake, and in the doorway 'Ted stood waiting with his sleepy, clever grin. He took Steven's hands in his and swore in a growling voice. Then he led him in and introduced him to his wife and daughter.

Steven was pleased by his first sight of Mrs. Forrest. She was delicately pale, with classic features and dark, simply arranged hair. There was a sense of orderliness of precision, about her.

He liked, too, Ted's tall, young daughter, Hope. But he was a little awkward with children, and she was hardly more than a child for all her growth. He noted merely that she seemed well bred, gentle, and unaffected.

After dinner the two friends lighted pipes and sat alone for a space under the dim light of a lamp. It was curious with how little they managed to say a deal; their very silences were significant with recollection, with the humor of character.

Ted Forrest was no longer the roaring iconoclast, prepared to gather together all the shams and hypocrisies of the world and send them up in a blaze under his own wrath. He, too, had been conquered by ironies larger than his own; and the magnificent impudence of his youth had been diluted thinly into an urbane, verbal cynicism.

"I shall go back to Italy this autumn," he said, and spoke of his home there with the sadness of an exile. "I've ceased to condemn anything or any one," he went on presently. "After all, it takes imagination, and I'm tired of imagination. What have you been doing with yourself, Steven? I'm glad you've given up work. Like patriotism, that's one of the dubious virtues."

Steven laughed.

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"You're as contradictory and inconsistent as ever, Ted. What have I been doing? Oh, I suppose I've been hunting for glamour. I've turned my back on my bookshelves, and set out to seek love affairs."

Forrest turned alert, gray eyes upon his friend.

"You duffer, you!" he pronounced.
"You haven't the cruelty, you're far too
good-natured, Steven! At a pinch I can
see you as Don Quixote, but never as
Don Juan."

"You may be mistaken," said Steven sulkily. "Confound it! I don't see why I——"

"Of course!" said Ted Forrest with a smile. "And maybe I'm wrong." He hesitated. "You'll be here for a time? I mean to keep you as long as you'll stay. I've some rare editions I want you to see. Rather in your line, perhaps. And meanwhile there'll be Rosalie and Sylvia Moreton."

"Rosalie and Sylvia Moreton?" Steven echoed. "Who are they? I don't know them."

"You will," said Ted Forrest grimly.

II.

Ted Forrest's statement, if not the tones with which he invested it, was made clear to Steven a few days later. Forrest carried his guest over to Balsam Lodge for luncheon, and Steven broke bread at Professor Theron Moreton's table.

Moreton was a scholar of the conventional order, by turns fussy and abstracted, and he was hardly the attraction in his own house. Steven could not conceal his admiration for his two daughters.

Those two superb girls swept him from his feet. For a moment he was as tongue-tied as a youngster, but in the light of a furtive scrutiny, he began to wonder how far the attraction of each was due to the other. For they were perfectly opposed, perfectly calculated to set off each other's charms.

Rosalie, the elder, might have been twenty-five or six. She was blond, little, and coaxingly impertinent. She had dancing eyes, dainty little gestures, and a ripple of gay, incessant laughter. Sylvia was stately and reserved. Her black hair had the sheen of a crow's wing, and her large, somber eyes pondered unfathomed thoughts.

Balsam Lodge was not too far distant from Ted Forrest's home, and Professor Theron Moreton was usually occupied in his study, reviewing the lives and works of people who had not been professors. So Steven Trayle found it pleasant to drop in, casually enough, to see the sisters again. This happened several times, and gradually he found himself engaged in a twofold flirtation.

Hg knew, of course, that it would presently go further than that, but for the life of him he couldn't decide which girl he was bound to love. Rosalie, with her graces, her light, cheerful spirit, her pink-and-white prettiness, was fairly sure to be surrounded by a coterie of young men from the cottages and the hotel down the lake. These played ukuleles, wore white flannels, and expressed themselves in a brisk jargon which made Steven feel almost elderly. But he couldn't—he couldn't quite help admitting that she was definitely interested in him.

Only, hang it, so was her sister! Of course, he wasn't sure; he had been disillusioned in the past, and yet—well, Steven would have liked that scoffer, Ted Forrest, to have noted some of those swift glances, those revealing remarks! Sylvia with a volume of verse in her hands, Sylvia at the piano in the first hush of the dying afternoon, sending pure, crystal notes across the unruffled waters of the lake, Sylvia enveloped in grave meditation, made a trio of romantic pictures. She had in her face that air of sadness, of pathetic

resignation.

Steven, trying to settle upon a choice for concentration, was tugged by both. Each fitted a mood perfectly, and each ran true to form like the characters of an operetta. However, it was toward the middle of the week that he managed to make a selection, and to blow into his wavering intimacy a breath of drama. He made the selection of a Turk, or a Mormon, for he selected them both. It fell this way.

A picnic had been arranged among the Forrests and the Moretons. A mild young man named Leonard Ashley, who accepted uncomplainingly whatever came to him, was also invited. Ted Forrest growled at the luncheon, and swore he preferred a chair to a rock and liked sandwiches unmixed with

grit.

Steven grinned at him and played with Hope. He had grown very food of her by this, and discovered that she was one of the few young girls with whom he felt perfectly natural. She would listen to him with serious eyes which would suddenly light with a child's desire for a game, for an excited hubbub. He found her novel, a queer little mixture of sophistication and innocence, with a faint, attractive burr of accent, arising from her foreign rearing.

As they sat about listlessly after eating, Hope proposed a foot race. Rosalie, overhearing her, clapped her hands and cried out:

"You darling! What a darling idea! I'll do it. Come on, come on, come on!"

She was up and off, Hope following. Leonard Ashley, the uncomplaining young man, got upon his feet and loped away with an air of courteous indifference. And then, in spite of the faint smile on Ted Forrest's face, and the sorrowful eyes of Sylvia, Steven rose with a cheerful halloo, and started after the runaways.

Just how it was done, he never quite knew. He had distanced Hope, passed Ashley, and was just coming up to Rosalie. She swerved, struck into the underbrush, and so down an embankment. Then she turned, shot a glance over her shoulder, capricious, inviting, and yet marked by a shadowy terror.

Hope and Ashley had lost the trail, and pushed into the woods in the opposite direction. Steven observed that Rosalië was running wildly as if in actual fear, and a queer exultation stepped into his veins. He knew nothing, save that he meant to reach her, to capture her. She wheeled at last, and faced him, panting, with a tremulous, protective hand pressed to her breast. Steven plunged heavily against her. And after that his arms were about her, crushing her. He had lifted

her head and kissed her desperately, as a thirsty animal might drink.

"I love you!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Rosalie, I love you!"

She struggled and relaxed. All at once her wide blue eyes fluttered open, stared at him, and twinkled.

"Do you like to kiss me?" she asked innocently.

"No, I hate it," said Steven with clumsy irony.

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She laughed at that, a clear, musical trill which was somehow seductive. It seemed to strike her as immensely funny. Then, though his own ears caught nothing, she pushed him away, and stopped his mouth with the palm of one soft little hand.

"Hush!" she whispered. "They're coming. Oh, you darling! I'm not afraid to say it. I'll say what I like, I will, I will! You are a darling. But I—I thought it was Sylvia you liked. When can we see each other?"

"To-night!" said Steven promptly.
"Down by the Bowlder Cave. At eight.
Will you be there?"

She nodded. He was conscious of lips that brushed his cheek ever so gently, and Rosalie had whirled away. When he had reached the clearing, she was already demurely walking back with the uncomplaining Ashley.

Steven found Hope waiting for him as he broke his way out of the woods.

"I didn't know it was hide and seek. I thought it was just going to be a race. Oh, say, I wish you wouldn't go back right now! I wish you'd sit down here and talk to me. I know you think I'm awfully silly."

"Silly? Sometimes you seem so wise you frighten me!"

She looked up at him and laughed nervously. She had flung herself down and was pulling with shapely fingers at a clump of weeds.

"But you do think I'm silly, don't you? No, I don't mean that. I can't

tell you what I mean. It's oh, I think you're horrid not to understand!"

Steven pinched her cheek.

"You mean I treat you like a little girl, and you're really a wicked old dowager, wearied of the world?"

"There! You see, you're doing it again!"

"Bless me! So I am!" exclaimed Steven contritely. "I really don't mean any harm. I'll try to be good. Just you remind me."

She showed him shining eyes.

"Wait! Just wait until you see me to-morrow. It's my birthday, and I've got a new dress and mother says I may put up my hair in a really old way. Then you'll be afraid of me!"

"I expect I shall be terrified. Don't you think, however, it's unfair to have the terror entirely on one side? You don't seem to realize that I'd like some one to be afraid of me, too."

"But I am afraid of you!" she asserted. "I'm afraid right now. That's what makes me seem so—so young. Honestly, I'm not half as young most of the time; I——"

"You funny baby!" said Steven.
"You're not young at all. You're—
you're charming! And if you're like
this when you're just a little older, your
father will have to shoo away your
beaux with a broomstick. Can't you
see him? I can. Won't he look like
an old witch?

"Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble,

I'll mow these suitors down like stubble!"

His falsetto was really amusing, and Hope, struggling with a sober face, went into a peal of laughter.

When they had made their way back to the others, Ted Forrest and Professor Moreton alone remained by the embers of the fire, and both were reading. Steven gave some abrupt excuse to Hope, and disappeared into the woods in quest of Rosalie. He descried what he thought was her figure, on a ledge

of rocks on the southern wing of the wooded heights, after he had tramped a long time. He called, she waved, he went forward, and found-Sylvia.

He couldn't very well retreat now. Besides, Rosalie and Ashley had probably gone on a jaunt together.

"Hullo!" he said easily. "Sitting all

alone?"

"I like to be alone sometimes," she answered. "But I'm glad you came."

"You're sure?" he asked, forcing

lightness into his voice.

She did not smile, but turned her dark eyes upon him with a searching

"You know that, don't you?" she murmured, and averted her head. "You-you've helped me. You've made things easier somehow."

Steven was touched by her vague dis-

"Tell me," he said. "You're not happy, are you? What is it?"

"Just nothing, I guess. I suppose - I don't know why I'm talking so frankly to you; but you're sympathetic I suppose I've always hunted for an ideal in life, and when I've found it, he doesn't---" caught herself up, stammered, and grew crimson.

An amazing, flattering suspicion stole into Steven's mind. He put his hand on her arm, and tightened his grasp. With a little cry she met him halfway and buried her head against his shoulder.

"You do care for me!" she whispered. "Oh, tell me you do care for me! I—I thought it was Rosalie!"

"I love you," said Steven throatily,

and kissed her tenderly.

"Do you like to kiss me?" she asked gravely. The repetition of that question seemed odd, and he answered as he had done before:

"No, I hate it."

He was surprised to discover that she, too, laughed delightedly, as if he had

said something immensely funny. In certain respects there was no doubt that all women were alike.

The plash of a canoe paddle and an echo of voices rose from the lake below. Steven released her and jumped

"I must see you where we won't be disturbed," he said. "When can you

meet me, and where?"

"At the Bowlder Cave? At eight o'clock?"

"Good!" Then he remembered that he was to meet Rosalie there to-night at the same hour. He shuddered at his nearness to a catastrophe. To-day was Tuesday. He would meet Sylvia to-morrow.

"On Wednesday?" he stipulated.

She whispered yes and showed an unconcerned face to Ashley and Rosalie in the canoe which had swung into view around the bend.

At the risk of being swamped, Steven permitted himself to be taken aboard as a passenger. He stepped out on the beach below the encampment, and while the others went ahead, he pulled the canoe safely up on the shore. He was exultant, though a little scared, over the predicament he had created. Ted could scarcely laugh aside his pretenses as a philanderer if he had witnessed this day's performance! Two girls—sisters—desperately in love with What man could have done him! more?

On his way up the hill he was startled by an indeterminate sound near the pathway. He parted the bushes. Hope lay, face downward. weeping.

He stooped, lifted her, and held her

quietly.

"Hope, what's the matter?" he begged. "Why are you crying? What's happened?"

She turned her head obstinately from him, and little sobs shook her body.

Steven was bewildered.

"Hope," he commanded, "look at me! Look at me, I tell you!"

At last she turned her tear-blurred face toward him.

"Now laugh!" said Steven softly. "Laugh, or I'll cry, too!"

She struggled, struggled desperately, and then, while her tears continued to

fall, her mouth curved into a trembling smile.

All at once she jerked herself to her feet, and ran from him. He gazed after her with perplexed eyes.

III.

Steven excused himself after dinner and, catching up a cap, strolled down to the hotel for a packet of cigarettes. It was a little after seven, and a black night had fallen, unrelieved by moon or stars. Wind rustled in the trees, ominous of storm, and the lake slapped the shores with ripples of ebony.

It was still too early to start for his assignation at the Bowlder Cave, and Steven selected a chair on the deserted veranda, and sat reflectively in the dark-After a while two young men came out and settled themselves near him. He paid no attention at first to their idle, bored talk. Then the sound of a familiar name galvanized him into attention, and he strained his ears.

"Yes, I've heard they're back at their old trade. It's a funny thing those girls don't get married! They're good look-

ing enough!"

"That's always a mystery," a deeper voice replied. "Lots of good-looking girls stay single, and lots of plain ones go like smoke. And dear old Rosalie and Sylvia are pretty tired of playing around. They're crazy to get married!"

"By Jingo!" said the other suddenly. "That reminds me. I hear they've landed a chap this time-or one of 'em has. Some old bird staying with the Forrests. Pleasant sort of fossil, too,

they say."

"Good for the Moretons!" answered the deep voice. "I was afraid Rosalie would have to take that ass, Len Ash-They are clever, though! That trick of Sylvia's, pretending to be desperately unhappy and falling into a fellow's arms. She did that with me once. Not that it got her anything! And they say she has the temper of a rat. A fellow I know went up there one day and heard her ragging the old man until the poor old boy nearly blubbered."

"That's nothing!" said the other. "Dick Gravely goes to the college where old Moreton teaches-I forget what it is now. He said Rosalie was a regular college widow. She used to vamp freshmen, pretend to play football, and one thing and another, and let them catch her in a scrimmage. Say, that girl must have been engaged seriously at least thirty times."

Steven sat where he was, scarcely breathing, until the speakers rose, yawning, and wandered away. He got to his feet and cut down the slope toward the Bowlder Cave. Groping his way through the intense blackness, he stumbled drearily ahead on the faint path.

He was humiliated. He had made a fool of himself as usual. He smarted to think that once more he had proved himself a sheep in wolf's clothing. Well, he would continue the program only so far. He would see Rosalie tonight, and Sylvia to-morrow; he would confess that he, too, had been a player, and without rancor, without a scene, he would leave them to the pursuit of other guileless fellows.

Right here, perhaps, he should have reacted, and should, with a smile, have followed the game like a cunning trickster. But he had perceived finally that he was no philanderer, but only a hopeless romancer, the prey of every honest woman, not the pursuer. His was no jaded taste requiring a stimulation of lies and artificial relationships. He had been seeking the simple love he had never known in his youth, and the chance for that, alas, had died with the vouth.

He plodded on, and a disgust for his purposeless quest stirred his blood. Hewas done. George Moore was appropriate on the shelves of his library, but he proved absurd as an exemplar. He would go abroad and wander among galleries and study the glowing past.

What, after all, had he learned? He had had contacts of a sort with a woman of society, with an emotional actress, with an impudent wanton, with a nurse, with an intellectual woman, and with these two shrewd players. What did it all mean? He was weary and disspirited. He was losing that instinct of gentleness which had made the

world for him a gentle place.

And he saw, as if in a vision, life as a thing of slanders and unmotivated cruelties, crowded with the treachery of friends, with rules made by people strong enough to break them, where virtue was often cowardice and sometimes laziness, where doctors, lawyers, and clergymen often spent themselves hiding hypocrisies and gratifying vanities, where wisdom went to the wall and sedate stupidity won a prize, where clumsy men brawled and foolish women shrieked in an endless puppet show at which the high gods watched and loudly laughed.

In such a mood he quietly parted the saplings and peered down upon the beach by the Bowlder Cave. A woman was waiting there, a shape of mystery. A tremor of surprise went through Steven. He had managed somehow to make out that figure even in the darkness. It was Sylvia! He had told her Wednesday, and to-day was-to-day was --- Great Scott! It was Wednesday, after all! He must get her away from here before Rosalie arrived.

At that instant the underbrush was

broken through on the shore from below him, and Rosalie herself came forward. Sylvia had stepped back into the mouth of the cave. Rosalie advanced toward her. There was a silence, a sound of whispers, in which Steven thought he heard his own name, and last, as he watched and waited in horror, a sudden confusion of cries rose shrilly upon the night.

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A voice of chagrin said:

"Rosalie!"

And Rosalie answered shakily:

"What-what are you doing here?" Steven had a wild desire to laugh. He told himself he was a cad, but a sense of hysteric amusement trickled through him. He moved stealthily away as fast as he was able, and clambered up the hillside toward Ted Forrest's home.

When he opened the door there was no one visible, and he recollected that the Forrests had gone down the lake for the evening to see friends. But a sound caught his attention. He looked up and stared as he saw Hope, with a flushed face, descending the stairs in a pale-blue frock of simple, alluring lines.

Steven stood there dizzily. This was no child, this was a woman, immensely appealing and desirable. As he watched her, he could find no words; he could gaze at her only with steady, startled eyes. She came down slowly, step by step. Then an emotion, unencumbered by rhetoric, took Steven by the throat, and he knew at last, beyond doubt or questioning, that he was in love. In that flash he recognized that he had not until now abandoned his library, but had seen all things through the spectacles of literature.

The spirit which gripped him here was of another sort. He could not make phrases about it. He felt acutely un-He had presumed-he had dared-to take this lovely girl in his arms only that day and comfort her with laughter. The enormity of the act made him giddy.

"Hope!" he cried miserably.

"Hope!"

She came nearer. She had reached him. Her eyes were mischievous, and still she said nothing. He put out his fingers, withdrew them tremblingly, touched her at last, touched her humbly. Her face lost its color; she could not take her eyes from him. And suddenly he had her safe in his arms, and he knew now that this was final, that there would be no trickeries in this quarter, nor any ironic surprises.

In a course of folly he had laid himself open to whatever came, marriage, an affair, a flirtation. But he knew at length that he wanted one thing only—he wanted this girl, and he wanted her forever. The world had magically become a place of vivid colors, of smiling children and kindly men, of sacrifices and endeavors which blundered through the centuries—who knew?—toward some unknown, splendid goal.

Meanwhile he rested content. He had solved his destiny. And with Hope in his arms, her frightened, happy face pressed tight, her heart beating, beating, beating, he thought only of the wonderful fact that she who was his was unlike all other women, incomparably their superior. She was different. He kissed her then, and heard her say, after a little:

"Do you like to kiss me?"

"No, I hate it," said Steven from force of habit.

It seemed to strike her as immensely funny. But the man was not even aware of a comparison. For he was in love.

Thus far the adventurings of Steven, the philanderer!



ON NIGHTS LIKE THIS

"How Love revives on nights like this, When Want is magnified by Need."—ALAN SEEGER.

ON nights like this I live the old times over.
Songs of the insects, misty autumn haze,
The faint, sweet breath of dying, fragrant clover,
Bring back to me those ancient, vanished days.
Again I feel the old-time bliss,
On nights like this.

On nights like this the world of woe has vanished,
Only a memory of youth remains;
I live again those days, all sorrow banished,
Love in my heart—later the autumn rains.
But joys of old I scarcely miss,
On nights like this.

On nights like this, when all beside is sleeping,
Thou hold'st my heart again, with old-time power:
Thou art mine own—ah, heart, how thou art leaping!
It is a dream, to fade within an hour:
But with the autumn's breath I feel thy kiss,
On nights like this,

ELIZABETH E. GOODENOW.



The Cobra

By Clement Wood



Y ORKE stopped abruptly. The cigarette he was raising halted in mid-air; the feathery ash lengthened and sifted down to the tawny velvet carpet. He watched the women who had entered.

The preliminaries of "Tabby" Gates' party had rather bored him. were the usual clubmen in the grill, the usual pungent and pointless stories; tonight these annoyed him. Before the wide grate upstairs-the "Ramble Inn" was proud of its colonial tiled grate and Endicott andirons-he was whelmed with the usual gush, the usual large-eyed, unmeaning coquetry. Tabby was right; it was "merely the Bijou Even Maizie Kane and Doris Darden seemed insipid; and Doris was supposed to have the keenest tongue in stardom.

He slipped through a deserted hallway and into a tiny parlor done in russet green and tawny brown. The sight of scattered wraps on the stiff-backed chairs told him that the place was being used for the girls' dressing room. He flipped the ashes deftly from his perfumed Russian cigarette, the strongest Solokin could make for him, and started out.

Then, from a side archway hidden by portières, she entered. Her head was veiled, her back toward him; but even before his nostrils caught and quickened to the mordant sweetness of the

blended Eurasian perfume, he had felt that imperative fascination she had for men.

Before she stopped by the nearest unburdened chair, she grasped his presence, and had turned toward him. When she stopped, she was half facing him.

From beneath a rich flood of redbrown hair, shading softly into a deep mahogany in some of the coils, her eyes looked straight at him. Later he learned their colors and peculiarities; now he was struck merely by the dominant cloquence of their level gaze. Then he was aware they were laughing at him; he felt a warm wave of color washing his neck and cheeks.

Slowly her hands undid the soft chinchilla robe. Imperceptibly it slipped down, revealing the gradual blossoming of her shoulders, flawlessly formed, and with a golden luster which bewildered while it attracted. The gown, a peculiar earth gray, was cut low in front, and was caught in the middle by a sunburst of topazes and yellow diamonds.

Her hands tightened on the cloak, half off, half on now. Then her full, red-poppy lips parted lightly in a provoking smile, and her bewitching chin elevated provocatively. It was a challenge, an invitation, "too ravishing to resist."

Yorke's fingers closed on the smoldering cigarette. His eyes remained fixed on hers. "That's a dare," he said.

She held her position; he felt an unbreathed taunt at his clumsy inability to play up to her mood of frankness.

Three noiseless strides covered the space between them, and Irving Yorke had her in his arms. His clasp tightened around her, he pressed her close. His lips met hers.

He heard an embarrassed exhalation of breath in the doorway; Tabby Gates swayed his weight nervously from one leg to the other.

"Hello, old man. 'Lo, Nell. I didn't know you two knew each other."

Yorke stepped gracefully from her. In laughing tones she cried:

"We don't even yet!"

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The host, blandly astonished, smiled an introduction.

"Nell, this is Mr. Yorke—Irving Yorke. This is Eleanor Day, Irving. If it's necessary."

"It isn't," Irving said mechanically, his eyes still on her. "Thanks, anyhow."

He helped her remove her wrap, and crossed the room to lay it over a chair. When he looked up the woman had gone. He did not have to ask which way; the wake which she left of vibrant perfume declared the direction she had taken

His wide eyes accused Eric Gates' friendly complacence.

"Who the devil is she?"

"You don't know Nell Day, the Cobra girl?"

"Cobra?"

"At the Bijou. It's only a little part, of course, in 'The Belle of Baltimore'—Dolly Darden's hogged the chief spotlight. But Nell has one song that gets right over. It's a bird! 'Kiss Me Today'—haven't you heard it? We'll have her sing it to-night."

Yorke heard enough of the fatuous gossip; he urged Tabby unsuspectingly toward the main hall. His eyes caught a vague vision of the earth-gray rough-

ness which was her gown, with the ocher sunburst smoldering where the cloth was caught together below the shoulders. He noticed then—while her eyes were directed toward the flaring coals on the hearth—that while the material of her dress had an appearance of roughness, it was actually silk, woven to resemble small gray scales. The Cobra girl? Then she turned sinuously to him, and he forgot all the arresting details of her in the luminous effect which her gaze gave.

He cupped her elbow deftly, pulling

her to her feet.

"Hi, there, Tabby!" he called as he led the way to the dusky dining room beyond. "Where are we to sit?"

Gates looked worried.

"You're here, between Maizie and Tod Mallory's wife. And Nell's down here."

Yorke smiled, without embarrassment, as he flipped the card to his left to the far end of the table, and substituted the Hudson etching marked "Miss Day." "You don't object?"

"I'd arranged--"

"Damn your arrangements, Tabby! We've got to sit together!" They both granted him a smile, then Yorke maneuvered the girl past the table, glittering with crystal, to the window bench curving above the low, wide sweep of the Hudson.

It was for this spot and this view that the Ramble Inn was sought. Yorke seated her here. Her eyes took in the still beauty of the river's gray coil far below, and curved responsively into a misty gray crescent. He did not take his eyes off her face. Here he noticed for the first time one peculiarity of her eyes—their chameleonlike quality of changing color and shape in response to what they gazed upon.

At last she faced him. He noticed now that the eyes were a gray-blue, with a bewildering lemon or orangecolored tinge, as if a coating of this color covered the iris beneath. The pupil was round and regular, but each eye contained also an odd triangular pupil pendent from the circular one. She sat quietly, while he absorbed these things.

"I like you." There was a provocative simplicity in the banal statement.

"Why do they call you the Cobra girl?"

"You will see, at the Bijou. You will like me there."

He marveled at the placid assurance which her presence gave him. He experienced a shrinking of all other matters, a vast dilation of the present satisfying moment; it was as if he were swallowed up in the mere fact of seeing her.

After a while, they rejoined the rest. But Maisie, Doris, and the other girls were uninteresting to him; the fascination of Eleanor dominated even his

straying moments.

Tabby Gates would not be content until he got her upon a table for the "Kiss Me" song. Before the end of it, she slipped off the table, and her last appeal, "Kiss me—to-day" was given directly to Yorke. And, forgetful of the crowd, of the place, of everything except her unhooded eyes and her conquering lips, he kissed her for the second time. It was wild horseplay to the crowd, who shrieked for an encore.

The plans for departure were disarranged, just as the table seating had been. Into the cloaking night Yorke's lithe roadster buzzed, overcoming powerfully the star-roofed roads before him. The preliminary, wordless rapture of her presence wore slightly; he slowed down.

"Of course I knew who you were, Irving; although I knew you didn't know me. I knew you got your millions from your father, and your splendid body from football. Harvard, nineteen eleven, wasn't it?"

"Nineteen ten. Then you probably

know more about me. That I have no business to be here, for instance."

"Yes. You are engaged to be married to Miss Ruth Lee, the attractive, and so on. Sister of Captain Stanley Lee, of my Stanley Lee." She tossed her head with an odd gesture, an insouciant pose of mastery.

"You know him?"

"Do I! He's mad about the whole Bijou crowd, of course; but most of the orchids come to me. He's told me of you—and of the sister who's so proud of him. Tell me"—and her eyes gleamed starlike into his—"what is she like?"

"She is fine and splendid, and utterly unlike you." He smiled a half apology.

"And you," she added, a thoughtful drawl in her velvety tones. "I know her appearance, of course."

To her surprise, Eleanor detected that her effect on the man beside her had become diluted since the mention of the other woman's name. Try as she could, she was unable wholly to banish the change which the change reference had brought.

Her eyes flickered a welcome to him the next night, when she saw him across the footlights in the lower left-stage box. She did not know until later that he had purchased the box for the run

of the play.

Between this first brief appearance and her main song, Eleanor sat staring at her own eyes in the flawed dressing-room mirror. Self-fascination she had never been able to achieve; but she had never failed when she sent her summoning signal to men. Hitherto her efforts had been tentative, experimental; she had deftly withdrawn from each affair before it had reached the consummation which would clog her movements hereafter. She had waited, until she was sure the right man was located, and Irving Yorke was the sort of quarry she waited for. His money would give her

what she craved, and, since she had seen him, the personal appeal bulked as large.

The cue for the tropic scene came. Out of the tangle of swaying jungle maidens she flowered grayly into the spotlight, a cobra's hood flat upon her hair. Fascinated, Yorke watched her luring temptation of her dancing partner, and his acceptance of the apple—and the kiss. He felt no jealousy; he localized himself in the youth who looked into the cobra gaze.

The applause was electric; he leaned forward, forgetting to applaud. She came on alone, and sang over the "Kiss Me" chorus; this time it was directed at him. The audience, quick to appreciate this common device, chuckled and applauded.

From her dressing room they whirred to a road house. More and more he released himself to the powerful fascination of the charmer.

She would not tell him much about herself. He learned from others how she had suddeny flashed toward the crest of Broadway's fancy, and, also, what there was to be known about her parentage. Her mother, it seemed, was the only daughter of a rajah, whose elopement with the infatuated younger son of a noble English house had been hushed up, to prevent its becoming an international scandal. glamour had already grown up around the cobra girl, and she used it to the fullest. Her apartment, decorated in the exotic fashion of the serpentine East, became the rendezvous for Hindu visitors to the West. They came in and out at their will, meeting her Occidental friends and bringing their own. Their hectic talk of the home land set her fancies gypsying; but the ever-present struggle for success in the big city won her back. And now the new lover completed the alien charm of New York.

Yorke preferred her to have her all to himself; but at times he let Tabby Gates

and the others in for the pleasuring trips, which grew increasingly hilarious.

The girl wormed out of him all his secret thoughts and feelings, even as she was successful in securing a constant flow of costly presents—a string of matched pearls, an unusual diamondand-sapphire armlet, a car. She spent hard, doubtful hours reviewing one trait of his character which bothered her—a fundamental ruggedness of disposition, a moral obstinacy, which seemed not to yield to her subtlest appeals.

The night before the big dance which Ruth Lee's aunt was giving at Sherry's she tried a new turn. She felt piqued that she was not a part of the dance, and she told Irving to be sure to be on hand for the tropic scene this night.

When she repeated the chorus, she waltzed under his box, as usual, and, at the last words, the "Kiss me—to-day!" she leaned over and met the waiting lips. Yorke was dazed with the sudden rapture of it. The mere publishing of his affection for the girl made the whole thing, he felt, cleaner, less furtive.

II.

When he arrived at her aunt's house for Ruth, the next evening, she turned on him as soon as the maid had retired.

"Don't you think, Irving, that this business with that cheap actress had better stop?"

Yorke steadied his voice as well as he could to an air of friendly surprise. His hands fidgeted uncertainly with the small square package he had been about to present, when her caustic salutation damned his words. He was no adept at deception; some emotional outbreak would bring to the surface the concealed honesty beneath, even when he had planned an elaborate fiction.

"Whoever put that notion into your head, Ruth?"

"What you've done." She faced him coolly, casually; but he read at once

the clipped accuracy of her syllables, the rise and fall of her breast.

"Why-er-why I haven't done anything, Ruth! Who's been talking to She looked at him steadily, "The way dominantly interrogative. you listen to those Roche girls and Gladys Pyne! You've told me yourself Mrs. Pyne tried to break off our engagement, to give dear Gerald a lovely Southern bride." Ruth tapped an irritated gold slipper upon the sleek floora danger sign. "Or is it one of Stanlev's varns?" Yorke assumed a judicial, almost a paternal, pose, hands clasped behind him. "You ought to try to cure this, dear-this tendency to fly off at nothing, at mere trifles. Life isn't melodrama, you know. Though I like you as a cultured spitfire-blazing cheeks are very becoming, with your golden gown." He saw at once that this tack aimed at troubled waters. "I've been to the Bijou, of course, several times. But I haven't done anything."

"Of course not!" There was a glacial slash in the deft modulation of the tones of unbelief. "You've done nothing—except made an ass of yourself! It isn't a pretty performance, Irving."

He felt a proud comfort even in the sting of the words. Ruth was one of the few women he knew on whose lips vulgarity was delicate and even snobbishly charming. Eleanor was still too close to the real thing to deviate even slightly from a velvety gentility.

"That's exaggerated."

"Of course, I've known for some time you've been seeing too much of her. You missed the Van Tyne dinner last week, and the Colony Dance, to be with her; and you've repeated the performance three times this week. That's your business. But when it comes to kissing her in public—"

"I didn't! I merely-"

"Let's get it straight, dear. We're not even married yet; there is still chance to correct any mistake. Aunt Flora told

me to talk to you a week ago, but 1 thought you would right yourself. You haven't; you've got worse, Irving."

Yorke laid the small box on the glinting cover of the table, and faced her; an inner agreement with her condemnation broke out in a tense flood of contrition

"Oh, I've been an utter fool again, Ruthie. Eleanor Day's a nice girl—as straight as can be, but——" He felt the muscles of the hand he was holding contract to flinty hardness at the mention of the girl's name. He kissed it until it relaxed to its usual softness, "Am I too much of a fool—or can you give me one more chance? Darn it, Ruth!" He caught the cloth-of-gold bodice, careful not to disarrange its artistic symmetry, and drew her to him.

"Oh, Irving-" she faltered, strug-

gling to breathe.

"I'll do anything in the world you say, sweethear... You just say—"
She regarded him in perplexity.

"I don't want to be unreasonable, dear—"

"You couldn't." His surrender was fatuously wholesale.

"But I don't see how you can keep this up, after—after last night. I don't want to fetter you, but——"

"You don't want me to see Eleanor

again?"

"That seems fair to me. Or else see only her."

"You know you are priceless. I'll break the thing right off!"

"You dear!" She caught his kiss on the rosy warmth of her cheek.

"Look what I've brought you!"

"Oh, I know already—the intaglio!"
She had admired wistfully the antique Florentine jewel in a Fifth Avenue shop window.

He exulted in the sky-blue of her

eyes, as they rose to thank him.

"Let me pin it on!" He reached clumsily for it. Somehow it scraped between his fingers and slid to the floor. Awkwardly he stepped back to find it. The sharp scrunch as his heel met some resisting substance caused a look of worried realization to shoot from eye to eye. He held out silently the fragments—the setting bent, the pin bar broken off. Only the incut jewel was unhurt. He wondered inwardly what blind resentment, hidden even from himself, had guided his fumbling, destructive steps.

"Oh—it was so—so lovely!" She almost sobbed out the words, her eyes pressed against his shoulder.

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His voice could not lose a certain tremor, as he gently kissed the tears on the long lashes.

"I'm just a clumsy ass, Ruth—words can't describe me! But I'll try, dearest,

Sunlight after the sprinkle. She fled lightly to the maid's bundling ministrations, and soon the carriage was spinning smartly toward the center of the night's festivities.

He tried to picture Eleanor's beauty, as they talked lightly of social strategy at the coming affair. The stiff dark plumes of the trees in Central Park invited him to restful reminiscence. His mind perversely refused to vision the fanged fascination of the Cobra girl. Instead, he saw Ruth Lee as he had first seen her. She had gone to school with Miriam Gates, Tabby's sister; and he had run the fleet *Shadow* in at Old Point Comfort, to pick up the two girls.

When he saw her first, she had the whole tumbling sweep of the gray waves for a background. She stood at the front of the yacht, her spice-brown hair flashing like heavy gold in the sun, her body lithe, with the grace of a wind-clasped sapling. The sky was a cavity of endless blue. For a long time she seemed to him quite indifferent, almost boyish in her piquant aloofness. He liked her, sought her out, for this undemanding comradeship which was her first gift to him.

Irving Yorke was skittish when it came to women, at this time. They hunted him too vigorously; they had poisoned a healthy admiration and attraction for the sex into a cynical belief that each woman was a self-auctioneer, offering the permanent or transient enjoyment of her charms for his bidding. Everything joined to make him a general prey: the Yorke social position, the double fortunes from his father and older brother, his personal magnetism, an intangible possession which was as definite a drawing card as the others. He was hardly handsome, with a thin, almost somber face, which inclined, however, to lighten to a boyish smile on trifling provocation. But he was tall and had hair which curled and a personality which shone -and the women flocked where he was, clogging his enjoyment by their patent

Thus Ruth's comradeship was a cool relief. Irving felt he shared with her only brother Stanley, then a Pointer, but now a fledged captain attached to the general staff, the wealth of chummy, sisterly esteem. She had always put Stanley first, since that unforgotten last message of her mother, that he was to be her son from now on; and Irving fitted naturally into the rôle of family friend and adviser, and ultimately of lover.

She told him frankly that she did not want him, at first; she was wise enough to avoid the man who was too much sought after by women. What were her charms to overweigh such competition? When he saw that she meant this, he plunged speculatively into an ardent pursuit which won its object, one pale night as the yacht slipped up from the staid Jersey shallows. Half dazed by the misty golden wonder of love, she gave him her lips and her "yes." Until the hectic opening of the infatuation for Eleanor Day-almost two yearshe had kept his lips for hers, barring, of course, the necessary tribute due old friends in the gay world which Gates and the crowd moved in and out of.

Some of these reminiscences he suggested to Ruth, as the park passed and the smooth blocks slid by. But the loverlike intimacy was shattered at the door of Sherry's. Ruth's aunt had the ability to achieve an icy hysteria when even the most trifling things went wrong. Stanley was useless. The lure of well-filled khaki for fluttering young hearts kept him busy. Ruth must do this, and would Mr. Yorke mind seeing to that?

The dance satisfied even the nervous anxiety of Mrs. Leander Torrence, Ruth's exacting relative; but to Yorke it lengthened out into an aching unrest. Ruth's duties as hostess made her distrait and unapproachable; the copious coquetry of the simpering species of débutante, the obvious wiles of girls who had failed to marry, or had succeeded, tasted flat after the colorfulcharm of the Cobra girl.

Tabby tipped him a wink.
"Going down afterward?"
"Eleanor's? Not to-night."

"Some stunt of Nell's, last night! Want to sublet that box seat?"

Yorke took himself off in inner passion. What a rotten mix-up the whole game was! He had been a fool to make that promise to-night to Ruth! A fool to get mixed up with Eleanor in the first place! A fool to cripple himself by getting engaged! What harm could come from his seeing the girl? He didn't intend to marry her and she knew it. And this dead crowd—even Ruth lost her interest, amid the funereal conventionality—it was enough to sour a man into anything! If he were only with Eleanor!

And he could be! He had told Ruth he would break off the thing at once. Well, he would certainly have to see the Bijou charmer to do the breaking off!

He planned it out quickly. Yes, he had time to get there before the per-

formance was over. Ruth herself found him, doleful and upset, in a corner, Yes, he had a headache; had had it since their adjustment. He wouldn't go home for anything! But, so realistic did he succeed in making the symptoms, that it was at her insistence that he bade Mrs. Torrence good-by, and let Ruth wrap him up and start him.

Within half an hour he was pushing his way into Nell's dressing room. She had just come off her final scene. The soothing feeling clung to him that she had radiated the arrangement of the whole night's happenings, that her directing hand had measured his every movement, bringing him there just at the first minute when she could see him.

Without a word he had her tightly embraced. Her lips stung him to a wilder vitality; the flood of her luring charm was as overwhelming as ever. He released her.

She smiled with heavy-lidded eyes, as they started.

"Why were you so flustered when you came, chérie?" she asked.

"Why, it was nothing," he answered hurriedly.

"What did the pretty fiancée say? That you must not see the wicked charmer any more?"

"You've got no business—— But I don't see how you guessed."

"She was bound to say it some time. Well?"

He kissed her fiercely.

"It isn't life without you!" He could not bring himself to speak of his promise to Ruth. Instead he suggested: "Tony's?"

She nodded gayly. Again he was sure she had determined on this before he had spoken. Tony's was then on West Thirty-ninth Street, and by one its mask of white-light near-respectability had been lowered, to let the impish visage of its bohemian soul glance out. Yorke liked the place; Eleanor reveled in it.

She could not tell how deeply Ruth's nik had sunk in; but Yorke could not disguise a cleaving aloofness which his overardent protestations could not hide. Eleanor called into play her one sure weapon. The warm, commanding lure in her eyes stole away his will. And before long she felt she had all the coils rewrapped, the breaks in the chain well repaired.

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His vehement protestations of undving love, his almost frenzied disavowals of any other idol in the world, were egged on by the dancing light her eves turned on him. With all her skill she played him for the most public avowal possible of his regard for her. She watched Yorke's keen, thin face meditatively. His money? Yes, that was there; but it did not figure prominently in her thoughts. Social position? Little enough of that could come to her, even if she had him. Himself? That, plus the joy in the conflict. She had entered the contest with a heavy handicap; despite it, she would win, by the invincible fascination which was her

The crowd shouted tumultuously that she must sing the "Kiss Me" song. Yorke roused himself immediately. He caught her by both hands, seeking to pull her down to him.

"Come on, let's go!" he said. "We'll go, and never come back. Never come back to New York! Come on, Eleanor —Cobra—you wonderful devil!"

She danced lightly from him to a place near the piano; he followed, humming with great gravity the opening measures.

Eleanor, on fire with her obvious conquest, sang the swaying verse with stimulating fire. As the inviting lines trilled out, she vibrated an attraction which caught and held every person in the room. Yorke quieted, in fascinated wonder, to her all-conquering spell. Magnificent in her self-assurance, an exquisite Oriental flower of passion, a

sibilant snake swaying to and fro, until her hearers froze in willing captivity —so Eleanor Day sang the "Kiss Me" song.

There was a slight stir at the other end of the hall during the middle of the verse. Several new couples came in. One woman in the crowd watched the scene by the piano with queer astonishment. She looked from the seductive singer to the figure slumped at the table before her; she slipped away from her group, and walked quietly to the seat opposite Yorke. When he looked up, it was to meet the straight gaze of Ruth Lee.

Tabby Gates, restive at the stagnation of the well-ordered dance, had suggested to Ruth and a few others, when it broke up, that they try a run down to Tony's to take in the sights. And it was during Eleanor's singing of the verse that they arrived.

As the girl struck the chorus, the message drove its way straight into Yorke's rapidly rousing consciousness. It was to him she was singing, with all the unleashed fire of her nature. At the same time, Ruth's gaze never wavered. She saw his condition at once. Her lips thinned to a straight line; she would see this thing through. If the action eventuated into vulgarity, she felt she could hold her own even in that.

Inside of Yorke the two appeals pulsed and struggled, first one ahead, and then the other. The sensuous call of the Cobra girl was infinitely the stronger; but the buried deeps of his nature responded to the other woman. Surging up again and again came the reiterant consciousness of his plighted troth, of his latest vows. The luring call sounded ever more strongly; but the other beat persistently against it.

She came to the last line of the chorus. While singing, she had realized in a flash of intuitive perception that this was the rival, and that now was the time she must publicly win the man.

She glided closer and closer as she reached the end, swaying in silky abandon. Then, half turning from him, she swayed back over her shoulder, lowering her lips further, further, until at the concluding "Kiss me—to-day!" the ripe rosiness of them beckoned him so closely that he had but to bend aside to touch them.

Ruth had risen as the Cobra girl came near. As the last words came forth, and the music stopped, the delighted crowd shouted its approval and its advice to Yorke to "Kiss her, old man!" while Stanley Gates and the couples from the dance watched the wordless drama in tense expectancy. As the last note died away, Ruth laid her arm caressingly, but firmly on Yorke's shoulder. The mental struggle was so great within Yorke that the clouds cleared away abruptly; the situation stood out before him in a painful glare. On the one hand, Eleanor's almost overwhelming appeal to the easier side of him; on the other, Ruth's strong touch of the deepest part of his nature.

Irving Yorke never lacked action. He bent carefully out of Eleanor's reach, laughed a "good night" to her, and walked without hesitation to the door. The last thing he saw was the look of stunned horror on her motionless face.

III.

Mechanically Eleanor fought through the second singing of the chorus. Her recovery had been just a jump ahead of the crowd's casual surprise at the situation. The music played on; before she had swayed through the last words, the mad, general enthusiasm broke again around her.

She laughed a refusal to repeat again. She was on the perilous emotional line where the slightest release of the reined self-control would swirl her under in complete breakdown; and she knew it. Gallantly she riveted the smile on her

face; she sank beside a red-faced, whitehaired broker, who had long begged in vain for the smallest furtive fraction of her attention.

Tabby lifted a chair to a place by her. It was none of his business if Irving Yorke couldn't keep his dates separated. Stanley followed him, looking vaguely upset.

"Hello, Barker," greeted Gates. "Join us, Eleanor?"

"Leaving just now, Tabby. Some other time, Stanley."

"Nell—if you'd let me——"
She looked at him unseeingly,
"No. No. Some other time."

She pressed the smooth white fur of her wrap more closely around her neck, as the shower of cool night air sprayed upon her. "Carriage, madam?" The yawning call man roused himself.

"Yes, please," she answered.

She saw the slim gray outline of a car in the darkness.

"Mr. Yorke's car." Her mind refused to progress at her dictation.

"The Nevin, Miss Day?" The chauffeur tried the clutch tentatively; he was used to queer combinations of his master's guests.

The thought of retreating to her rooms, after this bleak failure, shook her with physical pain.

"By the park," she ordered the driver. She had had no plan when she started out. But, after having driven around the park, the sight of the gaping carriage in front of the Torrence home in the lower Eighties, as she passed, cleared up what she was to do. The car did two blocks more.

"All right, Henry, I'll get out here, and walk. Thank you so much. Mr. Yorke won't need you any more tonight."

He touched his cap and sputtered off; the diminishing glow of the rear light seemed to symbolize her meteoric drop from the hem of success to this first fringe of defeat. She gathered up her skirts and hurried quietly over the sleeping pavement. Here was the carriage. The driver was leaning forward drowsily. She watched the pipe clutched methodically in his hand; it gave out no smoke. When she was even with the door, she stopped softly, slipped the catch, and stepped in.

The night was cold, the waiting long. Cheek against the chinchilla collar, she slept.

Ruth had not spoken a word on the jangled ride uptown; she was not sure how real was the apparent recovery from the maudlin mood she had first seen him in, crumpled up in fascinated slavery to the cheap charmer above. No words had come to his lips; anything he might say could only make the bad case worse.

Arrived at her home, he had told the driver to wait; for all he knew, his dismissal would be abrupt.

Inside, she sat watching him, a somber disappointment misting her clear gaze. The uncertainty pained him so that he had to speak.

"I suppose I'm hopeless, Ruth. You'd best fire me."

"Are you using this for an easy way to dismiss yourself? Is this what you want—to surrender to mere wanton lure?"

"I swear I didn't intend to see her that way. I said I would break it off; I went to do it."

"Your headache?"

"Yes, I lied; I felt so miserable. I have a pounding headache now."

"Peculiar medicine you took for it!"
"If you fire me____"

"Work it out with yourself. I'm ashamed of my careless optimism; it isn't as easy as I thought it would be. It's been a lesson to me, Irving—to see you once just as you were, to know what I've to expect. But I am game for it. If the engagement's to be broken off,

you'll do it by your own actions. No, don't try to kiss me now; it isn't fair to me to let you do it—although I want to, want to! Love's got to begin right! Let me hear from you to-morrow."

This was all he could get out of her. He left uneasily; it was depressing to have virtuously dismissed Nell, and then to achieve so little with the other girl.

A short word roused the drowsy driver.

"Home."

Yorke paused, foot on the carriage step, to catch the cool shrug of the night wind. He felt that his imagination was wildly wakeful; the stinging sweetness of the Cobra girl's heavy perfume seemed to speak out of the dark immensity of night; he felt he was fighting his way through a bewildering flood of it.

The side door responded easily; he bent his head to enter. The carriage interior was darker than the dimness without. His eyes fell on the slim mirror inset obliquely across from him. The slow fingers of fright touched him: Had the evening's experiences unstabled his reason? Framed in the dim softness of her fur robe, the face of the snake woman gleamed palely out of the mirror in his carriage-dull, except for a catlike glimmer from the tawny, blue-gray eyes. The black pupil was large, but the clearly outlined triangle pendent from the center of each iris was highly distended and sharply distinct.

Then Yorke knew suddenly that it was no apparition of his heated fatigue, but the reflection of the woman herself. His shaken emotions cried for rest; and again it was to be stolen from him. He turned uncertainly away. A hand caught his, and held it.

"Well, Eleanor?"

There was an unwonted vigor in her reply. Her self-sure calm was replaced by a hectic, yet controlled aggressiveness.

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"Take me to your apartment. There's something which must be said to me."

No other words marked the return, as the horse hoofs clattered emptily down the night streets.

"You need not wait," she told the driver crisply.

She took the latchkey from him, startlingly furious at his slowness. Once within the room, and the door shut, she started pacing the length of the library, from the outjutting square piano to the tall desk in the opposite corner. Somehow she had writhed out of wrap and scarf; they bunched beside his lounging chair, suggesting her shape as a snake's last year's skin thinly reminds of its former occupant. He stood watching her tantrum; the turmoil quieted him.

The effect of greater speed in her passage grew constantly. There was a smooth sibilance in her pacing, as if she glided, or even writhed, her erect and angry course. She faced him once. His eyes could not miss the unhealthylooking bulge in her neck; the phrase "swollen with anger" recurred to him. She resumed the staccato whirling; the keen hiss of her skirt rasped his ear. The passion grew instead of diminishing; the unsteady air whirled around her as its furious center like an invisible maelstrom. She was lashing herself into a tempest of wrath.

Her breathing resembled heavy sobs, though there were no tears in her harsh, metallic eyes. The pulsing rhythm of her anger swelled chokingly. Yorke could hardly keep himself on the margin of the storm spreading from its center.

She started once toward him, her hands darting toward his face, whether for caress or not he did not know; but she changed her mind, and swayed from him.

He looked up again from his cigarette. Her back curved motionless before the mantel. All too late he noticed the large sepia etching of herself which

Ruth had sent him. Eleanor bent of it a look of bland malignity. His eyes could hardly follow her deft destructiveness, as rhythmical fingers tore it to strips. Shaking her hands free of the fragments, she turned, eyes dilated and shining balefully, to face him.

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For the first time she spoke, her voice vibrant with choking emotion.

"I shall die! I shall die! I shall kill myself!"

Against his will bitter words rushed from him.

"How dare you touch her picture!"
The tones began softly, with a smooth
swell which he thought would never

stop its mounting vehemence.

"If I only had her white throat here, as I had her picture! No, no—it is my own throat I would tear! How could you, how could you? And you told me—as late as this night—that I could count on you!

He stayed dumb, impotent in the tide of her emotion.

"I am fooled no longer—I see you as you are! You fit for me! You makebelieve lover! You knot in a weak girl's apron strings! While I—I would have given you—I would have given you—anything!" she cried convulsively.

Her driving intensity, aided by the leveled tumult of her eyes, swept through him. Up to now, her violence had been mere hysteria. Now he warmed to a part of it, as he felt himself entering the emotional storm through her eyes, seeing within with their in-turned gaze. He read the climbing wrath as a deliberate, a justified attempt to lash both into a passion which must fling them into each other's arms. He felt at ease, despite her storming.

She sensed the difference at once; her tones rustled down to an uneasy moan.

"I shall kill myself!"

"Swear to me you will never do it!

"You do not love me!"

"By all the fire of hell, I do, Eleanor

and you know it! For your sake for my sake—it's so useless! No matter how our tangled affairs turn out, not, not that! Promise me!"

The smooth moan shook him into

agony.

"I promise. But, oh, you will marry her?"

"I have promised."

"But you've promised me you would leave her, and come to me! Even tonight, before she came—and last night!"

"I know, I know."

"I can never show my face among my friends again. It's hell, Irving! I took you at your word—I told every one. I couldn't stay here! Not only the shame—I'd be put in jail! The credit I've got from milliners, jewelers, all sorts of people, because they counted on you! This is nothing—but you swore to me— The dreadful thing is—you don't want me!"

He took her burning cheeks in his chill palms; he felt his will overridden again by the conquering riders of passion. He brought her face close to his own.

"You know I want you more than life itself!"

"But you went to-night---"

"I am promised."

She shoved by the intangible obstacle, kissing his lips fervently. She stopped. This was false satisfaction, she knew; she tricked herself into a brief belief that it presaged victory.

Her chief reason for the insistent attempt to rewin him shone gradually into her consciousness. Hitherto she had not met the man she could not bring crawling to her feet. Now this most desired prey had turned cold to her. A sense of professional pride whipped her on. But this he must not guess.

She remained so still, so gray, her vivid eyes furled and hooded, that in very remorse he slid to his knees beside her, an arm thrown heavily across her back. She did not stir. His eyes faced

the wide window; from the throbbing wanness of the room he watched the night overflooded with a creeping pallor, a bleak herald of day.

A new warmth radiated from her into the spread of the room. She swung sinuously to her feet, and pulled down the black-green window shade, banning the unwelcome day.

"You will love me?" she asked.

"I've got to marry Ruth." He spoke doggedly.

Closer she came, until there was no

space between them.

"I wanted you to marry me once, Irving; that I planned for. It is not so important now, is it? It is your love I want. If you will love me, what does it matter what title she wins? I want you—you—to love me!" She cried almost pitifully.

Here was no flame of emotion such as she had begun with; here was the driving heat beneath the flame. Dizzy, overcome by her wide-eyed fascination, he felt his will totter; his soul hung limp

before her.

He tried to phrase the words she waited for. Out of the very fire of his stirred longing came an unwonted mental activity, which showed him for one dreadful moment as he was, as Ruth had described him—yielding to "wanton lure." In the limp instant of surrender he loosed his conscious self-control, and the hidden restraints of the Puritan generations before himplifted him above the crimson emotion to a chill height where further playing with the flame was impossible,

"No! It has to be all or nothing. I cannot give you all; it would be unfair to you, and doubly unfair to Ruth!"

"Very well!" The fire of her anger began to recede. "Very well! You have had your chance. Oh, you fool, you fool!" Under its tight leash he could sense the reined and burning turbulence. "And I thought you a man who could love as I can love—and hate as I can hate!" She kept stepping back, as if to hold herself from touching him with those gliding hands.

Her tones sank in volume, deepened

in intensity.

"Do you know what I would have given up for you? Everything! Here for weeks he has been pursuing me—loving me—offering me himself, his money, marriage, anything! While you—" She stopped, self-choked. "But now, I will say 'Yes!' to him—and then we will see what my fine lady says—and feels!" She was at the door; her beady eyes held him strangely. "Cobra, am I? And cobras fascinate—and strike!"

He followed her, his eyes sullen with

incomprehension.

"I don't understand at all. He? Who has been pursuing you? Whom will you strike? What do you mean, Eleanor?"

A flare of amazement at his stupidity swept her face. She stretched out the hand which held a tassel of her skirt; his eyes fastened to the tense luster of muscles contracting, as if they throttled the life out of the harmless gaud. Then her tones stretched out, tensely and full of a hard luster.

"Why, her brother, of course—Stanley Lee." His tone was filled with mock-

"Stanley! My God!"

"Oh, you have been blind to everything—except yourself and his puttyfaced sister! He's begged for one touch of my tiniest finger; now"—her eyes lighted oddly—"now, I shall give him—my hand!"

Irving's horrified eyes saw the hand muscles contract again, choking, throttling the limp tassel.

"He doesn't care for you!" he flung at her.

"You have been blind. Every day for a month he has come crawling, begging me to marry him—him and the Lee millions! He has more than Ruth, you

know; more than even you. I waited—for you. Now she has you, I shall take him—how will she like that?" She turned, her wrap gliding up over her golden shoulder, and whispered, almost to herself, "Fascinate—and strike!"

His words shook with impotent ferocity.

"We'll win him from you!"

"You can't—and you know it!" Her eyes were wide and unhooded. "He's made of different stuff from you, remember. And he's mine!"

Her last words rang with ominous finality in his ears. His blank eyes stared painfully at the unresponsive door. The room seemed permanently emptied. Weakly he pulled up the shrouding curtain which her hands had pulled down a few minutes before, and let in the dawn's thin grayness.

IV.

Ruth took the note from his trembling fingers, and glared over it dully. She seemed dazed. It slipped from her numb fingers, fluttering helplessly to the floor.

Irving, glad of any excuse to look away from her pain-grayed face, bent to pick it up. He groaned:

"I can't believe it; it must be a lie! Stanley wouldn't——" Irving began.

Her agonized tones corrected him.
"No," she said, "it is not a lie. I
talked with him this afternoon. When
does she say it will be?"

He read the note aloud haltingly:

"By the time you get this, Irving, men chéri, it will be too late to stop these two loving hearts. To-night's the night! A little trip to the justice, and the deed is done! May you and your dear Ruth forgive your devoted brother's impetuous affection, and cherish ever your new sister-in-law,

ELEANOR."

"You saw him this afternoon? What did he say?"

"He was never more loving, or more

broken up. I'd been both sister and mother to him for seven years; he remembered all of it. It was pitiful to see him; he agreed with everything I said, knew more about her than you or I, knows just what he is going into; but she has got him to such a pass that I, you, the old life, are in a world apart from her and what he wants; and he has determined to leave our world. He broke down and cried on my shoulder—big, beautiful, six-foot Stanley!—but he had promised her; the worst was, he really wanted to keep the promise. What men can see in her!"

He felt guilty at her spiteful exclamation. Even now, despite his sorrow at Ruth's agony, an alien something rioted in his blood which made him hot for the chase for a reason different from mere loyalty to his wife-to-be and her brother's plight; he felt a delirious envy that any one but he should hold that lithe cobra body, that its intimate inarticulate speech of love should reach any

senses but his own.

"If we could only reach them! I could stop it yet!"

Her tired eyes lifted hopelessly,

"Oh, Irving, drop this silly pretense. You've said it all along; you know it's false hope."

He paced the faded rug impulsively.
"But I am right! I've pledged my
happiness on it, Ruth. If I cannot pre-

vent it, I am willing to lose you, too. '
If I could only reach them!"

She slipped swiftly to her feet.

"Is it too late to try?"
His watch clicked out.

"The performance is just ending. We can find her. Come!"

At the Bijou, more disappointment. The stage world of unreality was folded bleakly against the wings, and the paid-for friendship of the doorman gave no aid.

"No, sir, Miss Eleanor went fifteen minutes ago. Yes, sir, it was a low black car, and the captain was with her. They went that way." His hand wandered vaguely off into the golden Broadway world swirling by the alley's corner.

A noisily cheerful "Ready, girls!" sounded in the dull dusk above; three tardy performers rustled down the narrow stairs. Irving stopped the last one,

"Hello, Maizie!"

"If it isn't Mr. Yorke! But you got up too late, Mr. Man; your chicken flew, oh, hours ago!" The pair ahead giggled their way out.

"Where did she go?"

She looked at him thoughtfully.

"I happened to hear her talking to Doris Darden. It isn't any of my business, but I don't mind doing you a good turn, friend. Can't you guess? There's a party at the Ramble Inn—and little Maizie wasn't asked."

Her eyes opened wider as she saw the cloaked figure at his side stir herself and catch his arm. She muttered an "I've got to hurry on," and left them quickly.

Ruth could not understand his delaying to send a telegram, when anything might be happening at the Westchester roadhouse. But he assured her that everything was all right.

"I've staked my happiness with you on this thing, Ruth; I'm not going to

fall down now."

Irying sent Ruth on into the ladies' room, to act as if nothing unusual were up. His body ached from the strain of holding the pulsing machine to its highest speed up the June-fragrant roads; be stumbled up the steps; his head spun dizzily. There before him, in the check room, stood the tall khakied figure of Captain Lee, alone.

"Stanley!"

"What the— What brought you here?"

He determined on a last appeal.

"You know, as well as I. We ran up—Ruth and I—to get in a last word with you, before you tied yourself up with

Eleanor Day. You know why she's doing this?"

"You bet I do—because I begged and begged her to." He turned rudely away. Irving's hand clutched at his elbow.

"Just a moment. That isn't the reason. You know the chase she led me, while I was engaged to Ruth. When I woke at last, she threatened to do this in order to pain Ruth, your sister. That's her motive."

The younger man faced the other brusquely,

"Listen to me, Irving Yorke. I've had about enough of your butting in! It's enough that I wanted Eleanor, and she said she would have me. Now you keep out, d'ye understand? That's plain enough, isn't it?" He turned, his feet scraping harshly on the woodwork, and went into the main room.

Slowly Irving followed. He noticed Ruth's slender figure, a white glow against the bizarre paneling. He spoke in an undertone.

"I saw him; he wouldn't pay any attention to me."

Tabby spied them and came over at once. No, Irving assured him, they were just up for a bite; then they must return.

Wedged beside Stanley's broad shoulders, Eleanor watched with satisfied eyes the progress of the solitary pair to the vacant table just behind the long one filled by the hilarious Bijou crowd.

"Family along to give you away, dear?" she whispered, close to Stanley's ear.

"Darn 'em, yes!" he said ungraciously; then cheered up as her hand fingered his.

The service was slow; the other tables cleared rapidly. The gayety at the big table was as vehement as usual; but an air of disquietude in the situation palpably chilled the enjoyment. Tabby yawned twice, and cursed under

his breath the spoil-sport pair who sail like two undertakers at a christening.

The evening seemed at a deadlock. Ruth shivered several times from the night breath of the Hudson, but told Irving not to get her wrap; she needed his bulk of strength beside her. Somehow his moody confidence remained, and something of it she blindly accepted, although she saw no way out of the maddening maze.

At length the brother rose, scraped back his chair, and pulled Eleanor to her feet beside him.

"Well, folks, we must be going. Wish us joy, now." His eyes continued to avoid Ruth's. "Eleanor and I are to be married to-night."

Ruth rose automatically. Now was her last chance. Eleanor's glittering glance, studiedly insulting, swept her slight figure from head to foot, as she called "Good night, Irving! 'Night, all!"

Ruth's voice broke the strained silence that followed.

"Stanley, come here a moment." There was insistent agony in the casual request; even the onlookers at the long table felt the tragedy outgrowing from the situation.

Stanley's eyes met hers for the first time during the evening; they were full first of the ample love he had always held for her. He half started toward her. And then he felt the immovable strength beneath the silken touch of the Cobra girl on his arm. His eyes left his sister's, and drowned themselves in the magnetic mystery of the gray-blue eyes, with their opulent orange overglow. Eleanor exerted all her mastery; content at last, she turned to the door.

Stanley looked back at his sister; his sight was glazed and dimmed.

"I'll drop by and see you, Ruth. Good night." He turned to go.

For a moment life went all gray for Ruth. They had failed. It was the last chance. Was she to lose both brother and lover in this one ghastly moment of dismissal?

Then Doris Darden injected herself suddenly into the scene. Her voice rang

clear and bell-like.

"Good night, Eleanor! Luck to you,
Stanley!" There was a hidden suggestion of bitterness which caught even his ear. "It isn't every girl could get away with that rajah stuff! There's an odd piquancy in being married to a pariah woman's daughter."

Not a syllable was lost on the crowd. Irving recovered first.

"Is this true, Eleanor?"

The Cobra girl's nonchalance for once deserted her. With frightened eyes, speechless, she stared from one to another. Why, in youth's mad adoration for the wonderful leading woman who had gotten her her first chance, had she given away that deadly secret on which her whole potent pose rested? She tried to speak; her pitiful attempt revealed only too surely to Irving how hard she was hit. Against her will her low voice spoke.

"It is true."

Stanley took her roughly by the arm, "What of it, Nell? I'm marrying you, not your mother!"

The awkward humor did not restore her. Her whole self-reared castle of deception had fallen at the breath of the other woman's revelation. In India, the pariah was outcast, not to be touched; pretending high birth was utter disgrace. The others did not look at it from this angle; but for once her quickness failed her; she could not see with their eyes.

"It is true. I am pariah." She stood limp, an unromantic, nervous, wornout woman, her magnetism vanished, the cobra fire gone. Heavy lines around her mouth showed her collapse; even her body seemed to shrink within its sheathlike covering. "I do not love you, Stanley. Go! I cannot marry you!"

Even Irving marveled at the com-

pleteness of her break. She took herself out of Stanley's arms.

And then there was an interruption at the door. A man with a clean-cut face entered briskly; two others in uniform were behind him.

"Hello, Irving!" he called over. His eyes swept the crowd, narrowed, closed on Eleanor's depressed form. He walked over to her quietly, taking her arm.

"Come on, Gita. You're arrested."
"Gita!' The startled word escaped her.

"Know your name, eh? Gita Dahl, alias Eleanor Day," reading from the warrant.

Tabby's face registered comical dismay.

"Isn't there a mistake? On what charge?"

The man nodded to the others.

"Take her, there." He turned to Gates. "Complicity in a conspiracy, financed with private coin, to instigate a revolt in India."

He took Irving's hand gratefully.
"Your wire located the last of them.
We bagged six to-night—not bad, eh?
Bhopal Singh, Lajrai Nath, Captain
Mueller, the go-between, and two

more."
Stanley roused himself.

"You must be mistaken."
The plain-clothes officer turned.

"Capiain Lee, attached to the general staff? Didn't you have a package?" He whispered in Stanley's ear.

The other went white. He took a wallet out, abstracted an oilskin-covered packet of papers, examined them sharply. He passed them over to the secret-service man. "Mere blank paper."

"Do you recognize this?"

He grasped eagerly the similar package the other held out to him.

"Where did you find them?"

A nonchalant finger pointed to the prisoner.

night; we'd searched the night before. You're lucky, captain."

"Did she-did she-

"Take them herself? No. She was just a pawn in the big conspiracy; they used her apartment, and used her, mainly without her knowledge. But they've put her deeply into it; and it's such a serious thing that the government had to have her-and it may go hard with her."

A sharp exclamation behind him startled all of them.

"No, you don't!" A tiny vial tinkled on the floor, struck from Eleanor's

"In her apartment. "Put there last hand. The colorless liquid slowly ate its way into the rug.

"Just stopped her in time. Poison."

Her fangs clipped forever, her poison spilled, Eleanor Day went out meekly between her captors. Stanley looked sheepishly at his sister.

"May I ride back with you two?" Catching their nod, he went for his

"Well, dear," Irving drew her into the deserted hall, and shyly clasped her for a kiss, "do I earn you now?"

"For always and always!" The grotesque paneling will never tell what the next few moments of silence held.



THE ATOLL

SEE a schooner, white and still, On a round, dimpling, blue lagoon. Outside, where breakers poise and thrill, I hear the beaches croon.

I see a fleet of boats that floats On a green-rimmed pool of sunken sky. The palm trees stand like quarter notes Of a chord the wind and I

Play on great bars of light and shade, Sweeping their keyboard where we pass, Stippled beyond the beach and laid On water clear as glass.

I see pearl divers, stripped and wet, Poise and leap and plunge deep down. And brown heads, bobbing up, forget To press thick lips and frown.

I could go stroking overhead, To fill my lungs with light and air, From this city of the living dead To life far over there. JOHN CURTIS UNDERWOOD.

Daughters of Lilith

By Berton Braley

THEY burn like scarlet stars above the dust
Of long-forgotten states and dynasties;
Their bodies now are blown by every gust,
Yet their hot, cruel glory never flees.
Delilah, Chrysis, Cleopatra—these
Live in their insolent sin and regal shame.
They drank the cup of evil to the lees;
Daughters of Lilith, wrought of searing flame!

Bright, baleful beauties stirred by every lust
Of flesh and spirit, serpent-quick to seize
The dagger for a sharp and treacherous thrust,
Or subtle poison for their enemies.
Salome, Clytemnestra; such as these,
Maleficent, but mighty in their fame,
Still wield their sable wizardry with ease,
Daughters of Lilith, wrought of searing flame.

How many million women, pure and just,
Were swept away upon Oblivion's breeze
While these great wantons, void of faith or trust,
Shine in the glamour of their harlotries!
Jezebel, Messalina, Lesbia—these,
And Catherine, Du Barry, Borgia, claim
Homage of time to their red memories,
Daughters of Lilith, wrought of searing flame!

Envoi:

Princes and men of lowliest degrees,
For all we shudder and for all we blame,
We pay their meed of guilty awe to these
Daughters of Lilith, wrought of searing flame!

Ainslee's Books of the Month

GOTTON CONNICLOO and FORGOTTEN, by Camille Mayran; E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

THE Library of French Fiction, of which this volume forms a part, is designed to illustrate the life and manners of modern France. Paris is not the whole of France; wherefore many of the works of fiction offered by the library, including these two stories by Mayran, deal with life in the provinces. In reading "Gotton Connixloo" and "Forgotten" one glimpses the faith and the steadfastness of that France whose heroism and sacrifices in days of supreme stress astonished those who had pictured a nation composed of volatile and pleasure-seeking Parisians.

The strength of simplicity is demonstrated in the first of the stories—a chronicle of country life. As the story of Gotton is unfolded, the character of this peasant woman, first starving for love, then striving with singular unconsciousness to squander love, is developed with a sympathetic certainty which compels admiration and interest.

Gotton is a woman of the people who has been brought up with exceptional strictness by a father whose rigid piety controls his every action. The daughter, after a severe chastisement, leaves her father's house to make her home with a blacksmith who has deserted a quarrelsome wife. In taking this step she does not comprehend the extent to which she has imbibed the stern concepts of religion accepted by her parent. Sin has a very real meaning for her, and side by side with a growing love, not only for the man, but for his neglected children, is a growing conviction that she is being punished by an avenging Deity. For a time, love is strong enough to cast out fear and to triumph over the gibes and sneers of her neighbors. And it is these neighbors who benefit by the ultimate sacrifice of love. When the Germans invade the hamlet and are about to take revenge on the community for the murder of a soldier, Gotton assumes the guilt that is not hers, and gives her life to propitiate the invaders.

"Forgotten" deals with characters moving in another circle of society, but has the same directness of method and dignity of treatment. Both stories are illuminating in their skill in showing the influence exercised by the church in a country which is more Catholic than many appear to realize.

The translation is excellent. Easy and fluid, the English employed conveys every shade of toning, so that the

picture is exact and satisfying.

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, by Leo Shestow; Robert M. McBride & Co., New York.

THESE essays of negation serve one purpose and perhaps only onethey throw light on the Russian riddle by permitting Americans to get the point of view of one whose writings command attention in Russia to-day. Here is a sample: "Do, after all, let us dispense with gratitude, for it belongs to the calculating, bourgeois virtues. Let us forget light and gratitude and the qualms of self-important idealism, let us go bravely to meet the coming night. ... Night, the dark, deaf, impenetrable night, peopled with horrors-does she not now loom before us, infinitely beautiful?"

E. F. B.



In Broadway Playhouses

By Dorothy Parker

The Season's Greetings

THE new theatrical season came in, to devise an arresting simile, like a lion. Scarcely had the theatergoing element of the population absorbed the idea that all was over with the old season, when the new one was upon them. "Sudden" isn't half the word for it; there was no sneaking softly up on the public, no breaking it to them gently, one play at a time. The theaters abruptly blazed out with new electric lights, appropriately grouped to announce fresh wonders on display within. New productions sprang into being on every side: it was impossible to turn around without running into a firstnighter. Before you could have said "Jack Robinson," the season was in full swing.

And at that, the number of new offerings was but part of what it would have been, had not lack of theater space prevented. It seems that, despite rushed work on those theaters in the process of construction, the playhousing conditions in New York are such that many a show is wearily trudging the road, for want of a shelter. As you moil about, searching for an apartment, you might pause a moment to consider that, in this greatest of cities, in this highest of civilizations, there are producers who have not even a roof to cover their helpless little dramas. It will, undoubtedly, brighten things up considerably for you, if you will give this a thought, for it is unfailingly agreeable to reflect that there is always some one who is worse off than you are.

But the producers appear to have struggled along pretty fairly well, considering. In the first fortnight or so of the season—before they could conscientiously be said to have got into their real stride—they unveiled almost a score of offerings. New plays unfolded at the rate of two and three a night, for one feverish period, and straining to keep abreast of the current drama brought hollows to the cheeks, sowed silver threads among the gold, and caused black specks to dance before the eyes.

Attempting to give an orderly account of the first batch of new productions is rather like striving to write a detailed description of the scenery, while plunging over Niagara Fallsnot exactly like it, of course, but close There is a mist before the enough. eyes, a dull roaring in the ears, a sunken feeling just below the Empire waistline, as one looks helplessly out over the whirling mass of comedies, farces, musical shows, and melodramas. Dizzied with the rapid succession of entertainments, it is difficult to clear the head sufficiently to distinguish who is playing in what, and how. Here and there are soothingly clear places, gratefully distinct impressions; the rest is darkness.

"Enter Madame" stands out with particular vividness. The work of new authors, offered by a new producer, and headed by a new star, it brings with it a welcome freshness. Brock Pemberton has presented it cleverly and cast it admirably, and Gilda Varesi plays it, as you know she would, delightfully, displaying a gift for comedy which her previous rôles, in "The Jest," "Night Lodging," and "A Little Journey," have given her no chance to exhibit. It is dangerous work to go about making sweeping statements so early in the game, but even the most cautious could assert without a tremor that the light comedies which the season may bring forth will have to exert themselves considerably if they are to measure up to the standard set by "Enter Madame."

The program credits the play to Giulia Conti and Dolly Byrne, but it was everybody's secret, even before the opening, that Giulia Conti was Miss Varesi her-Yet, while it supplies her with ample opportunities, it is by no means the usual actor-written vehicle, in which all the action is arranged around effective entrances and exits for the author star, and in which the dialogue consists almost entirely of dissertations by every member of the cast, including the star, upon what a fascinating creature the star is. In "Enter Madame," the progress of the comedy itself claims the author's attention, and they have little left to devote to hymning the charms of the leading lady—which is, in itself, a daring novelty.

Lisa della Robbia, the temperamental heroine of the play, is supposed to be, and is, highly fascinating; but every now and then, just when she is harping a bit too consistently on her charms, she is refreshingly reminded by one of the characters that she is a conceited.

middle-aged woman, who never, even in her palmiest days, was any Lillian Russell. It is such innovations as this that lift "Enter Madame," far above the usual run of comedies.

The rôle of the temperamental one's husband-not nearly so thankless as it sounds-is played by Norman Trevor. and, doubtless, is being played extraordinarily well by now. It was played extraordinarily well on the opening night. when you consider that he had committed to memory a total of perhaps eight lines for the three acts, and, for the remainder of his part, recited aloud the whispered words supplied him by his earnest coworkers. It was considerate, in that it gave those seated down front the opportunity to hear each of his speeches twice over, but it tended to retard the action a trifle. The rest of the cast blends almost imperceptibly into the characters of the comedy.

There are one or two rather languid spells during the play's progress, notably at the beginning, and in the course of one of those intendedly hilarious supper parties which always fall so distressingly flat on the stage. But they are brief and soon forgotten, and they in no way interfere with the truth of the statement that "Enter Madame" is a delightfully amusing entertainment, and an auspicious beginning for its sponsors.

Another of the recent big occasions was the production of "The Bat," a mystery play by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood. It appeared at just the right time, for the public can go just so long without a good, bloody murder, and then they simply can't stand it another minute. "The Bat" offers not only murder in luxuriant profusion, but practically every other listed crime, with the exceptions of bigamy and defacing the Never has the theatergoer sidewalks. received a higher-heaped measure of dastardly deeds for the price of his seat,

plus ten per cent—and ten per cent amusement tax is little enough to ask, goodness knows, on two murders, several assaults and batteries, a milliondollar robbery, and a nice case of arson!

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A notice in the program begs those who see the play not to reveal the workings of the plot to future audiences; but the request, though well meant, is sunerfluous. No one could sit down and explain that plot, with all its complica-The expounder would in all tions. probability go mad, and the listener certainly would. It is doubtful whether the local stage has ever known such a medley of popular crimes, growing ever more bloodcurdling as they increase. Indeed, the whole play is performed to the accompaniment of a rhythmic clicking, as of a myriad castanets, caused by the chattering of the audience's teeth.

On looking back, one discovers that there are several places where events don't seem quite to fit together, but it is only on looking back that this is noticeable; one is too busy, trying to ward off hysteria, while the play is going on. And surely, even if things do not always hitch, one can overlook that, for the sake of the delightful evening of cold chills which the authors have provided.

But something that one really cannot overlook is the introduction, at all the most thrilling places, of comedy relief in the person of a burlesque servant girl, played, with all the expected accessories of pigeon toes, curl papers, outthrust abdomen, and whining voice, by May Vokes. Just when one is in a state bordering on emotional insanity at seeing a mysterious hand reach in through a window, its blood-stained fingers writhing as it gropes for the latch, it is irritating beyond all words to have Miss Vokes come in and sit down on a hot-water bag, or simulate drunkenness on tasting elderberry wine, or perform any of the other specialties in her large repertory. If only the authors, while they were compiling the casualty list, had had the maid murdered early in the first act—or even before the curtain rose, say—the evening would have been one of unalloyed delight.

"The Bat" is extremely well presented, with particular thoughtfulness with regard to lighting effects. Whenever some one lights a candle, a blaze of electric light does not promptly illumine the stage. Also, it is efficiently played by a cast including Effie Ellsler and Harrison Hunter.

Mrs. Rinehart and Mr. Hopwood had no mystery left for their other play, "Spanish Love," which they adapted from the Spanish of José Feliu y Codina, Carlos de Battle, and Antonin Lavergne. The only mystery about it is why it took all those people to think it up. The story, stripped of its fringed shawls, its red sashes, its chiming chapel bells, and its reference to the huerta, is simply that two young men loved the same girl, and, naturally, the one played by James Rennie got her.

Mr. Hopwood, this time in collaboration with Charlton Andrews, has still another work on view, this one a delicate trifle called "Ladies' Night." The big scene is laid in the women's part of a Turkish bath, into which a party of men accidentally gain admission. You can see for yourself how prettily this would work out. Little can be heard of the lines, owing to the fact that the women characters, who are constantly being surprised in their lingerie or less, keep up a chorus of piercing screams, which drowns out most of the dialogue. One gem, however, was sharply audible; an inventor, so it runs, has conceived the idea of a pickle protector, to be worn over the shirt fronts of dill-pickle consumers, protecting them from the squirting juice. After hearing this example of the badinage, the screams are soothing to the ear. The interpreting cast is headed by John Cumberland, whose famous uncomfortable manner, despite its usual effectiveness, can do little to make "Ladies' Night" sufferable. Mr. Cumberland some time ago announced his intention of retiring from bedroom farces; he has carried out his laudable intention by appearing in bathroom farce.

Another farce, but one that not even Doctor John Roach Straton could say a sharp word about, came to the Fulton Theater, bearing the title of "Scrambled Wives." It is from the mutual pen of Adelaide Stanley and Martha Matthews, who last year gave the world "Nightie Night." It was a bright day for them when Roland Young was cast for the principal rôle in their latest production, for he makes the farce far more amusing than it has any right to be. It is considerably lighter than air, stretched out so thriftily to cover three acts that one fears it is going to give way at any moment. As a matter of fact, it could be brought to a close any time after the first fifteen minutes or so, for a simple word of explanation on the part of any of the characters would fix everything up, and the rest of the evening could be devoted to coin tricks or trained Bedouins.

But, in that case, we shouldn't see so much of Roland Young, which would be a great pity. Juliette Day, the other featured performer, plays enthusiastically, and the work of Marie Chambers stands out effectively against the background of the usual house-party-farce cast, which always seems to have been recruited from the Thursday Night Euchre and Dramatic Club. But if it weren't for Roland Young—

And if it weren't for Minnie Dupree and her delightful characterization of the spinster secretary of a girls' boarding school, there would be little to rise and cheer about in "The Charm School," an adaptation of the charming and clever serial by Alice Duer Mil-

ler, and which was made into a comedy by Mrs. Miller and Robert Milton, with what the billboards announce as "a wee bit of music by Jerome Kern." And a wee bit it undoubtedly is-scarcely perceptible, in fact. There is a fresh idea back of "The Charm School"that of a young man who inherits a girls' school and carries it on according to his own ideas of female education. teaching the pupils to be charming-but it is obscured for a great part of the time by a thick and heavy sweetness. While Miss Dupree and James Gleason are on the stage, things clear exhilaratingly, but they have not a great deal to do, unfortunately. Sam Hardy, who delivers his lines as if he were reading a message to Congress, was a peculiarly unhappy choice for the hero of so frail a comedy.

Another comedy, "The Cave Girl." by George Middleton and Guy Bolton. fills the stage of the Longacre Theater. It is one of those things about the city dwellers stranded in the heart of the trackless woods. There, after three acts spent in the vast beauty of Lee Lash's great, green outdoors, beneath the tall trees whose murmuring branches are appliqued on strips of netting, they follow the example of the little untamed girl of the forest, with cheeks tanned by the spotlight's kisses, and words uttered in the quaint backwoods accent of Times Square, and find the true value of things, there close to the wild grandeur of the backdrop. Miss Grace Valentine, on this occasion, plays the woodland heroine, while the most convincing of the city-dweller contingent is John Cope, in one of his accustomed refreshingly disagreeable rôles.

Two plays dealing with Wall Street affairs, after a hot race for presentation, landed almost simultaneously in New York. They are, reading from left to right, "Opportunity," by Owen Davis, featuring James Crane, and "Crooked Gamblers," by Samuel Ship-

man and Percival Wilde, with Taylor Holmes. Both show the conventional stage picture of Wall Street doings—the feverish rushing from telephone to telephone, the frenzied shouting of stock quotations, and the brokers in cutaways and patent-leather shoes. A personal judgment awards "Crooked Gamblers" a slight edge over "Opportunity," for it has a scene, purporting to represent the curb market on a busy day, which is the funniest thing that the contemporary stage has to offer, next to Frank Tinney.

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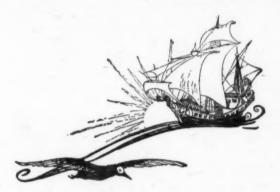
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For, to the versatile Mr. Tinney, ap-

pearing both in blackface and under his own colors in "Tickle Me," goes the palm for the season's funniest performance, to date. The show itself has some exceedingly good songs, with music by Herbert Stothart, some surprising chorus girls who can sing, and a Russian dancer who looks startlingly like Babe Ruth. But all this is almost wanton lavishness on the part of the management. With Frank Tinney, as with Ed Wynn, the show itself makes little or no difference. Just as long as he can be on the stage for most of the evening, nothing else matters.



THE HEBREW SCHOLAR: A PORTRAIT

ALL night he cons the law with wrinkled brow,
One thumb in dialectic rage outthrust;
His voice drones on—it now exults and now
Sinks low, as if to mourn a world of dust.
Reb Hillel, spinning thought, evolves once more,
In twisted arabesques like fairy lace,
Dim legal fantasies and antique lore
Seen vaguely through the lens of time and space.

The clock ticks on with mildly even stress—
A shadow steals behind—it dare not mock
The lonely man. At night his dreams unlock
A door that closed on sweet forgetfulness,
Swung shut one day of-sunlight long ago,
And now creaks open wide by candle glow.

ELIAS LIEBERMAN.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

FVERY reader of AINSLEE'S will welcome the return to it of Marie Van Vorst. Her story, "The Fifth Hole," in this number, is the first of a new series of society sketches by one who knows the people of whom she writes, and who is very near the top among the short-story writers of America. It was in AINSLEE's that her first work was published, and she has always shown a desire to keep in touch with her many friends among the readers of this magazine. If you like "The Fifth Hole," you will be sure to like "The Week-End Guest," which she has contributed to the December number. Look for it.

A LETTER from Detroit is one of several that have reached us concerning William Slavens McNutt. The author of the "Bill Heenan" stories appears to have a following which has become interested in him as well as in his writings, for at least two correspondents ask whether he came through the war without being wounded and is in Mr. McNutt was not good health. wounded, although no American correspondent spent more time on the actual firing line. His brilliant articles attracted the attention of the French government and he received a decoration as Officer of the Academy, one of the very few awarded for literary service in wartime. That his health is excellent he attributes to the fact that he has spent much of his time, since his return, on a farm, not too far from New York. Quite naturally and in-

evitably Mr. McNutt's art has been enriched greatly by his war experience, and his literary activity continues, and more brilliantly than ever. He will have a story in an early number of AINSLEE'S.

N the September number of AINSLEE'S a new writer was introduced in the person of Jaime Palmer, the author of "Grafted Fruit." The story aroused considerable comment, and the rather unusual Christian name caused more than one person to question whether Jaime Palmer should be addressed as "Mr." or "Miss." Neither. Mrs. Jaime Palmer is a young married woman who immediately followed her appearance in AINSLEE's by winning a first prize of one thousand dollars in a newspaper short-story contest.

RICHARD CONNELL, whose clever story, "Sixty-One Seconds to Train Time," is the nearest approach to the O. Henry model we have seen for a long while, is the author of the uproariously funny "Mr. Braddy's Bottle," which was published in the PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE for September, and which attracted the attention of reviewers in all parts of the country.

For next month's issue, the December AINSLEE's, there are rare things in store for our readers, notable among them a complete novelette by Henry C. Rowland, called "Doing Good." Mr. Rowland needs no passport into the good will of the reading public. His audience is a large and clamoring one.



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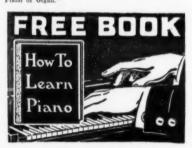


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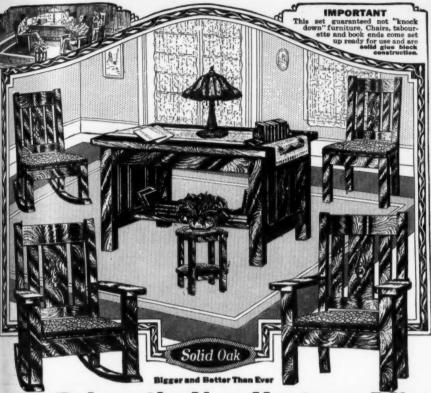
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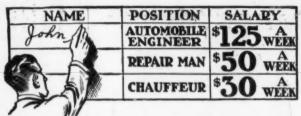
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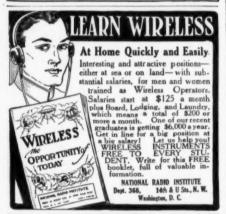
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improve your eyes 100%. We will cheerfully return your money if LA ROSE'S EYEBRIGHT does not satisfy you in every way.

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I send herewith one dollar for one bottle of La Rose's Eyebright. If not satisfactory you agree to return money upon request.

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With Strong, Double-Tread Tires! **Guaranteed for 5000 Miles**

Strong Double-Tread Reconstructed Tires are made by our skilled mechanics, of double the amount of fabric (from choice material), and are built to give more than the guaranteed mileage and service which our customers very often receive.

RELINER FREE
Tubes Guaranteed Fresh Stock

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| Size Tires 30x3\$5.50 | Tubos 21 60 | 34x438.75 | Tubes 82 es |
| 30×314 6.50 | 1.75 | 34x434 10.00 | 8.00 |
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Is Very Easy to Get, if You Go About It in the Right Way

You have often heard of others who doubled and trebled their salaries in a year's time. You wondered how they did it. Was it a pull? Don't you think it. When a man is hired he gets paid for exactly what he does, there is no sentiment in business. It's preparing for the future and knowing what to do at the right time that doubles and trebles salaries.

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We Will Show You How

Without loss to you of a single working hour we can show you a sure way to success and big pay. A large number of men in each of the positions listed are enjoying their salaries because of our help—we want to help you. Make check on the coupon against the job you want and we will help you get it. Write or print your name on the coupon sal send it in today.

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| Architect, | Lawyer. |
|---|---|
| \$5,000 to \$15,000 | \$5,000 to \$15,000 |
| Building Contractor. | Mechanical Engineer. |
| \$5,000 to \$10,000 Aptomobile Engineer. | \$4,000 to \$10,000 |
| \$4,000 to \$10,000 | \$3,000 to \$7,000 |
| Automobile Repairman. | Employment Manager. |
| \$2,500 to \$4,000 | \$4,000 to \$10,000 |
| Civil Engineer. | Steam Engineer. |
| \$5,000 to \$15,000 | \$2,000 to \$4,000 |
| Structural Engineer, \$4,000 to \$19,000 | Foreman's Course, \$2,000 to \$4,000 |
| Business Manager, | Photoplay Writer. |
| \$5,000 to \$15,000 | \$2,000 to \$10,000 |
| Certified Public Accountant | Sanitary Engineer. |
| \$7,000 to \$15,000 | \$2,000 to \$5,000 |
| Accountant and Auditor. | Telephone Engineer. |
| \$2,500 to \$7,000 Draftsman and Designer. | \$2,500 to \$5,000 Telegraph Engineer. |
| \$2,500 to \$4,000 | \$2,500 to \$6,000 |
| Electrical Engineer. | High School Graduate. |
| \$4,000 to \$10,000 | In two years |
| General Education. | Fire Insurance Expert. |
| In one year. | \$3,000 to \$10,000 |

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Hanes Guarantee:

"We guarantee Hanes Underwear absolutely—every thread, stitch and button. We guarantee to return your money or give you a new garment if any seam breaks."

Confidence in "Hane" winter underwear can never be misplaced!

"I ANES" underwear for men has been standard for years! Beyond my question it is the best value in actual quality, comfort and service ever sold at the price!

Behind every "Hanes" process, behind every thread and stitch, the "Hanes' guarantee looms up! This guarantee in your assurance of absolute satisfaction.

Examine "Hanes" critically. You never saw—or bought—such real and traunderwear service.

"Hanes" is made in heavy and medium weight Union Suits and heavy weight Shirts and Drawers.

This year we present the new yellow label medium weight, silk faced Union Suit, made of full combed yarn particularly for indoor men.

Like "Hanes" heavy weight Union Suits the new medium weight suit has the extra gusset which adds so greatly to comfort across your thighs; tailored, snug-fitting collarette; closed croth that stays closed; buttonholes that last the life of the garment; elastic knit, shape holding arm and leg cuffs. Shirts have the "Hanes" elastic knit collarette that will not gap; sateen vent; elastic knit cuffs. Drawers have a durable 3-button sateen waist band.

Hanes Union Suits for boys never have been equalled

They duplicate the men's Union Suits in all important features—with added cosy fleeciness. Made in sizes 20 to 34, covering ages from 2 to 16 years. Two to four year old sizes have drop seat. Four desirable colors.

Inspect "Hanes" underwear at your dealers. Put it in strict comparison with any underwear men the price. If your dealer camed supply you, write us immediately.

P. H. HANES KNITTING CO.

Winston-Salem, N. C.
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Warning to the trade: Any garment offstel
as "Hanes" is a substitute unless it best
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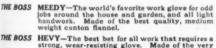
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The Brunswick Method of Reproduction



No More Scratching Noises-

Instead, Pure reproduction

One of the foremost features of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction is the Ultona, as pictured above.

It plays all makes of records—at a turn of the hand it presents the correct needle and diaphragm. Each record is played at its best, without the bother of attachments.

But another great advantage of the Ultona is that it ends those "surface noises" or scratching sounds formerly associated with phonographic music. It is the only counterbalanced reproducer and tone arm—and this patent is the secret of purer reproduction.

Contact between needle and record is so perfectly bal-

anced that all those old-time and dis-

To prove Brunswick Superiority, hear different records played on it. Note their greater clarity and charm. You've never heard any record at its

best until you've heard it on The Brunswick.

A Brunswick dealer will be glad to explain the Ultona and other remarkable advancements made possible by the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

Ask to Hear Brunswick Records

Played on any phonograph with steel or fibre needles. They, too, offer betterments.

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Canadian Distributors: Musical Merchandise Sales
Co., 79 Wellington St., West, Teronts, Ont.





Don't stick with the prune



MY DAD'S favorite yarn. WAS THE one about. THE OLD storekeeper. WHO WAS playing checkers. IN THE back of the store. AMONG THE coal oil. AND THE prunes. WHEN THE sheriff. WHO HAD just jumped his king. SAID "SI there's a customer. WAITIN' OUT front." AND SI said "Sh-h-h! IF YOU'LL keep quiet, MEBBE HE'LL go away." NOW HERE'S the big idea. WHEN A good thing. HAPPENS ALONG. DON'T LEAVE It to George TO GRAB the gravy. F'RINSTANCE IF. YOU HEAR of a smoke. OR READ about a smoke. THAT REALLY does more.

THAN PLEASE the taste.
THERE ARE no hooks on you,
THERE'S NO law against,
YOUR STEPPING up.
WITH THE other live ones,
AND SAYING right out.
IN A loud, clear voice,
"GIMME A pack of.
THOSE CIGARETTES,
THAT SATISFY,"



JUST plank down twenty cents on any cigar counter and get twenty portions of the real "satisfy-smoke." You'll say you never tasted such flavor, such mild but full-bodied tobacco goodness. You're right, too, because they don't make other cigarettes like Chesterfields. The Chesterfield blend can't be copied.

